



ANNUAL REPORT

2023



Aġenzija Sappport, Malta
Annual Report 2023

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAATE	Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe
AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ACTU	Access to Communication & Technology Unit
AI	Artificial Intelligence
COSP16	16th Session of the Conference of State Parties
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRPD	Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
EASPD	European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities
EAT	Electronic Assistive Technology
EFSLI	European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters
ENIL	European Network on Independent Living
EOI	Expression of Interest
ESC	European Solidarity Corps
ESN	European Social Network
EU	European Union
FITA	Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility
HR	Human Resources
ICL	Independent Community Living
ICLM	Independent Community Living Monitoring
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISAAC	International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ISPs	Individual Support Plans
KA1	Key Action 1

KA2	Key Action 2
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LSM	Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija
M&E's	Mechanical and Electrical Services
MATP	Motor Activities Training Programme
MIV	Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTF	Malta Trust Foundation
NAPPI	Non-Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PA	Personal Assistance
PAPT	Professional Advisory Prevention Team
PAS	People Assistance Schemes
PBS	Positive Behaviour Support
POMA	Protection of Minors' Act
PSP	Public Social Partnership
Q1 – Q4	Quarter 1 - 4
QARI	Quality Audit, Research and Innovation
RMHC	Ronald McDonald House Charities
SCSA	Social Care Standards Authority
SIL	Supported Independent Living
SLI	Sign Language Interpreting
STILC	Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
UOM	University of Malta



MISSION

Aġenzija Sappport is Malta's National Agency that offers and provides services, support and guidance to persons with disabilities, their support networks and their communities.

CAUSE

The Agency's cause is to serve as a catalyst agent in the implementation of the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its goal is to collaborate with persons with disabilities to develop accessible services and resources that enable and empower them to fully exercise their rights and freedoms, overcome societal challenges, and reach equity in society.



FOREWORD

HON. JULIA FARRUGIA PORTELLI

MINISTER FOR INCLUSION AND
THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

WHAT'S ANOTHER YEAR?

Time is both friend and foe. You want it to pass to see projects, initiatives and targets implemented and achieved. You want it to relent to find more space to fill in with new ideas, new projects and further innovation. This is always the thought that comes to mind when an entity like Ağenzija Sapport sees yet another year of travail go by.

In a fast-changing world deep in cliché and innuendo, it is easy sometimes to think nothing much has changed over the past 20 years, but the reality of the past decade, at least, tells a much more positive story. Suffice to say Aġenzija Sapport is living testimony to how far Malta has come in narrowing the gap between persons with disabilities and others without.

While still fighting a war to win over hearts and minds, Aġenzija Sapport has mellowed into an agency that started life as a “Supported Living Division” but is now geared towards “Independent Living”, a paradigm shift that has been bearing the intended fruit, with particular reference to the concept of personal autonomy as prescribed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Persons with disabilities in Malta and Gozo are fast being empowered by the State to at last come out of the traditional situation of learned helplessness. It is part of a massive process undertaken by Government that has already seen a remarkable change in the way people are in control of their own destiny. From women’s empowerment in politics, workplaces and society in general to LGBTIQ+ persons, this process also incorporates the case for more involvement of persons with disabilities in their own affairs and in the spirit of the UN Convention’s “Nothing About Us, Without Us” maxim.

The challenges are being faced with competence and determination, as we are witnessing in the case of persons with intellectual disabilities. The old perception that the most they could achieve in life was a place at a day centre if they lived with their family, or a residential institution if they did not, has been proven fallacious. Bringing out the potential and humanity of these people, who might not communicate and come across as expected by society’s norms, is an on-going exercise within Aġenzija Sapport in support of their hopes, dreams and abilities. Giving them the opportunity to live a fulfilled life, including contributing through the workforce, is of paramount importance and is happily occurring at a steady pace.

This deinstitutionalisation process not only aligns with UN and EU guidelines but also with the concept that it is up to a person to decide where and with whom they wish to live, and certainly not segregated from the community. With this in mind, investment has shifted towards creating new schemes and services that ensure persons with disabilities can achieve parity with their non-disabled peers in the community. It means transforming residential institutions into transitional centres in readiness for community life and day centres offering services congruent with better social and emotional development, fostering solid life skills, and with the input and oversight of service user committees.

Malta has become a leader in the field of personal assistance based on a system of personalised budgets, a reform developed together with the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) and submitted in a consultation document in 2023. The Agency’s schemes were also reformed, cutting down on bureaucracy, increasing accountability and oversight and ensuring a key role for persons with disabilities, both in top-down and bottom-up manners.

I am proud to see the Agency also shining on the world stage. We saw it lead an event together with ENIL and the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the UN’s Conference of States Parties to the Convention. The Agency’s best practices, such as through its Way to Work Programme, were presented following an invitation to the Union for the Mediterranean’s Second Regional Conference on Disability. And we saw policymakers, service providers and service users come together in Malta, when the Agency hosted the International Conference of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD).

At a Government level, there is still much to be done, but we remain committed to delivering. Another year has flown past, but the war for hearts and minds goes on as Aġenzija Sapport’s sterling work persists.



FOREWORD

MR OLIVER SCICLUNA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

I am delighted to present to you the highlights of Ağenzija Sapport's activities and achievements during the year 2023.

Throughout the year, we embarked on a journey of transformation and innovation, characterised by the continued reorganisation of our Agency. We finalised and implemented our strategic framework for the next five years, aptly named “Towards a Holistic Personhood”. This strategy is built on four pillars aimed at redesigning our organisational structure, enhancing research, quality and innovation, restructuring our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems, and fostering coproduction, collaboration and partnerships. Our goal was not only to align with the principles of the UNCRPD but also to implement them effectively.

In parallel, we undertook one of the most significant reforms in the disability sector’s history, transitioning from institutionalised care to promoting independent living in the community through personal budgeting and personal assistants. For this, the Agency collaborated with major stakeholders including persons with disabilities themselves and also the ENIL and launched a public consultation process to engage with the public on the proposed draft of this strategy. While ambitious, this project holds the promise of transforming the lives of persons with disabilities, empowering them to lead independent and dignified lifestyles and fulfill their potential and aspirations.

Central to our approach is the principle of coproduction, where persons with disabilities play a leading role in shaping the services they receive. We are committed to ensuring that their feedback guides our initiatives, and we have taken significant strides in integrating coproduction within our Agency’s operations.

In addition to these initiatives, we also focused on promoting arts and culture, launching initiatives such as the preparation and participation of persons with disabilities in the Carnival 2024 défilé and the opening of KreAzzjoni, a shop in Valletta where handcrafted items made by persons with disabilities are sold. We also expanded our services to Gozo through the initiation of the Way to Work Programme and established an Intake team to guide individuals and families in their initial contact with the Agency.

CENTRAL TO OUR
APPROACH IS THE
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PLAY A LEADING
ROLE IN SHAPING
THE SERVICES
THEY RECEIVE.

Moreover, we strengthened our commitment to addressing the challenges of attracting professionals with the required expertise to work within our Agency. Despite these challenges, we remain dedicated to enhancing the quality and efficiency of our services.

As I reflect on my first full year of leading the Agency, I am immensely proud of the dedication and passion demonstrated by our team. With unwavering commitment, they continue to strive towards enhancing independent living for persons with disabilities.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the opportunities and challenges that the future holds. We remain steadfast in our commitment to being leaders in implementing the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

MAP OF SAPPOR PREMISES

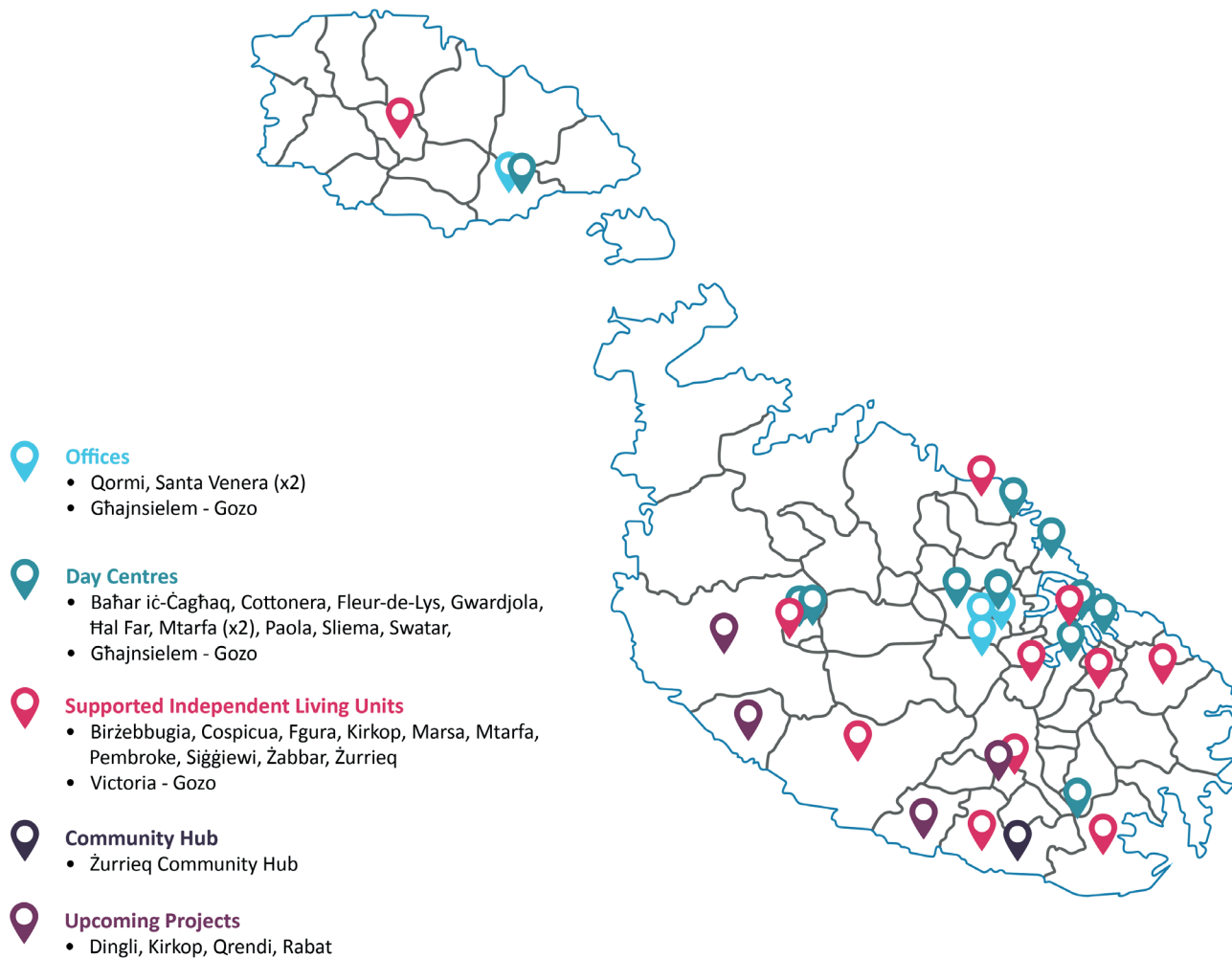


Figure 1: Sappor premises locations, 2023

SERVICES DATA

SERVICES	NUMBER OF SERVICE USERS IN 2023
Social Work Services	2,364
Family Support Unit:	
Support groups for parents of minors with disabilities	29
Fathers' Workshop	17
Positive Parenting Courses	33
Super Sibs	33
One-to-one parent coaching sessions	12 (number of families)
Independent Living Monitoring Services	383
Occupational Therapy Service	132
Sharing Lives	231
Community Services	105
Way to Work Programme	66
Day Services	500
Supported Independent Living Service	92
NGO Services (residential services, day services and respite services)	730
Helpline	4,626 (number of tickets opened)
Accessibility Unit:	
Blue Badge	2,973 (number of Blue Badge documents issued, including new and renewed documents)
EU Disability Card	381 (number of EU Disability Cards issued Nov-Dec)
People Assistance Schemes:	
Empowerment Scheme	1,361 (approved applications)
Vehicle Road License Exemption Scheme	761
Vehicle Registration Tax Exemption Scheme	149
Drive from Wheelchair Vehicle Grant	2
Grant on Modified, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles	2
Sign Language Interpreting Services	43
Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre	250
Access to Communication & Technology Unit	258

Table 1: Number of service users who benefitted from Support services in 2023



SERVICES

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

Social Workers serve as vital connectors between service users and various resources, both within their organisation and in the broader community. By facilitating access to support services, they help individuals achieve their goals and address the challenges they are facing. This approach underlines the holistic nature of social work, aiming to empower individuals to reach their full potential and address their presenting needs.

During 2023, the team of 18 Social Workers within the Support Social Work Services, constituted three main sub-teams: minors, adolescents and adults. This subdivision facilitated the development of specialised expertise within the team, enabling the Social Workers to better address the unique needs of each demographic group.

The overarching objective of the Agency's Social Work team is to advocate for and empower service users, facilitating their journey towards achieving a sustainable level of independent living. By prioritising empowerment, the team aims to equip individuals with the necessary tools and resources to navigate life's challenges autonomously, thereby minimising reliance on external services. Through a collaborative approach, the team endeavours to foster resilience and self-sufficiency within service users, ultimately promoting long-term well-being, community integration and independence.

Plans are personalised and aimed to address the specific needs of the service users, intentioned to empower the service users to address their felt needs effectively. Throughout the entire process, professionals provide continuous assistance to service users by coordinating with other services and stakeholders to ensure comprehensive support.

During the year under review, the Social Work Services experienced a notable surge in demand across several key demographics. This report highlights the increase in referrals and outlines the specific needs identified within three primary groups: parents of minors with disabilities, elderly caregivers

83 REFERRALS
WERE RECEIVED
BY THE
CHILDREN'S
SOCIAL WORK
TEAM IN 2023



48 REFERRALS
WERE RECEIVED
BY THE YOUNG
ADULTS' SOCIAL
WORK TEAM IN
2023

66 REFERRALS
WERE RECEIVED
BY THE ADULTS'
SOCIAL WORK
TEAM IN 2023



of children with disabilities and adolescents facing daily life challenges.

A significant number of parents sought support and assistance in managing the unique challenges associated with caring for minors with disabilities. The high volume of referrals highlights the need for targeted resources and specialised support services tailored to the needs of this demographic.

Adolescents encountered difficulties in various aspects of daily life, leading to referrals to Social Work Services for support and guidance. The number of referrals signals a need for enhanced mental health and social support services specifically designed to address the unique needs of adolescents.

Elderly caregivers were identified as struggling to provide adequate care for their children with disability, necessitating assistance and resources. The influx of referrals highlights the growing concern for the well-being of both the caregivers and the children they care for, emphasising the need for tailored interventions.

The surge in referrals among these vulnerable populations in 2023 emphasises the urgent need for specialised assistance and resources to address their distinct challenges effectively. Collaborative efforts between social work agencies and relevant stakeholders are essential to develop targeted interventions that meet the diverse needs of these groups comprehensively. Failure to address these needs adequately, risks perpetuating social inequalities and exacerbating hardships faced by these populations.

2,364 SERVICE
USERS ASSISTED
BY THE SOCIAL
WORK SERVICES
IN 2023

Number of service users assisted	2,364
Number of phone intakes	765
Number of drop-ins	110

Table 2: Number of interventions by the Social Work team, January – December 2023

Moreover, the Social Work team extended its support to other services within the Agency during times of crisis and in various social situations, highlighting their collaborative approach and commitment to comprehensive care.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- A significant achievement in 2023 was the extensive effort invested in establishing the Intake team. This team played a vital role by relieving Social Workers of administrative tasks they previously handled. With the introduction of this team, Social Workers can now concentrate more effectively on managing their existing caseloads.
- Throughout 2023, members of the Social Work team actively participated in facilitating and drafting materials for workshops and support groups conducted under the remit of the Family Support Unit within Aġenzija Sapport. Their valuable contributions played a pivotal role in enabling the successful execution of these workshops and support groups.

TESTIMONIALS

“My daughter is 14 years old. Aġenzija Sapport has supported us since she was seven. All the Social Workers who worked with us were all very caring and supportive. I could refer to them for any obstacles we came across and we were always guided well. This service made a great difference in our lives as we know there is someone out there who truly understands our everyday pain and struggles dealing with our daughter”.

Clarissa Xuereb, parent of service user, Children’s team

“I have been living with a disability for over 12 years and have faced a lot of closed doors but Aġenzija Sapport has offered me a lot of support in a very lonely road and helped me to get to know more about services that I can access. My Social Worker has been there for me and supports me throughout”.

Elizabeth Cauchi, service user, Young Adults’ team

“I found the service very useful. I am grateful that the Social Worker empowered him to make use of the services that he needs. I now feel at ease knowing that there is someone who can assist me”.

Marcelle Casha, parent of service user, Adults’ team

“The service given to us as a family is incredible. The Social Worker is always there for us”.

Lucia Busuttil, parent of service user, Adults’ team

FAMILY SUPPORT UNIT

In January 2023, Aġenzija Support commenced operations of the Family Support Unit as part of the implementation of the Maltese National Disability Strategy 2021-2030. This initiative aligns with Strategic Action 6.3 of the strategy, which mandates the establishment of a dedicated Family Unit within Aġenzija Support. Here, professionals provide comprehensive support and training to families caring for individuals with disabilities.



The primary objective of the Family Support Unit is to deliver a holistic support service to families who have children or significant others with disabilities. Research and first-hand experience indicate that disability affects not only the individual but also their immediate family members. Therefore, as the national agency for persons with disabilities, Aġenzija Support endeavours to extend support beyond the persons with disabilities to encompass the entire family and their broader social network.

The Family Support Unit encompasses a range of programmes and interventions aimed at supporting relatives of persons with disabilities. These initiatives include support groups, workshops and training sessions, both in individual and group settings. Additionally, the Unit serves as a primary resource for family members and guardians seeking support and guidance from professionals specialising in the disability sector.

PROGRAMMES OFFERED WITHIN THE FAMILY SUPPORT UNIT

- Support groups for parents of children with disability
- Workshops for adult siblings
- Positive Parenting programme for parents of children with disability
- One-to-one positive parenting programme for parents with intellectual disabilities and other cases benefitting from one-on-one sessions rather than group settings
- Super Sibs - a fun-filled programme for young siblings of persons with disability
- Fathers' workshops
- Acquired disability workshops – commencing in 2024 as a pilot project





The training programmes offered by the Unit are all research-based and evidence-based practices. Furthermore, professionals within the Agency bring a wealth of experience and expertise gained from their work with service users and their families. As a result, these professionals are adept at addressing the diverse challenges and needs faced by families, delivering tailored support through various programmes, group sessions and individual consultations provided by the Family Support Unit.

AIMS

- To provide support to families and their relatives with disability regarding disability-related issues.
- To offer a comprehensive service to families, encompassing support for both the persons with disabilities and all family members.
- To serve as a gateway to other services, including social work services and any other services available within the Agency.
- To develop innovative programmes and concepts in response to emerging trends related to disability.
- Promote importance of self-care amongst family members.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- In 2023, three support groups for parents of minors with disabilities were conducted, reaching 29 participants.
- The first intake of Fathers' Workshop was launched. This workshop is pioneering in Malta, concentrating on supporting fathers of minors with disabilities. Such workshops play a crucial role in challenging the notion that caregiving responsibilities should predominantly fall on women, thus promoting gender equality in caregiving roles. 17 participants started attending the first cohort.
- A total of 33 participants engaged in positive parenting sessions.
- Five Super Sibs sessions were conducted as part of the summer programme, reaching 20 siblings. Among these, two sessions catered specifically for minors and one session was tailored for teenagers who have siblings with disabilities, marking a significant step in addressing the diverse needs within the family dynamic. Following the Super Sibs sessions, a parent-child activity was organised with the goal of fostering quality time between children and parents. This activity proved to be a success, further emphasising the importance of nurturing positive interactions within the Family Support Unit. An additional 13 siblings attended the Super Sibs Christmas edition.
- From January to December 2023, a total of 62 one-to-one parent coaching sessions with 12 families was carried out. These sessions were conducted through various media including home visits, office consultations and online meetings.
- Meetings were convened to foster collaboration with the Fibromyalgia Association.



TESTIMONIALS

"Thank you so much for the Positive Parenting course. As parents of a child on the spectrum, we found it extremely helpful especially in relation to how we can discipline and it united us more as a family. We would recommend this course to all parents who have a child with disability as it not only shows you ways on how you can improve your parenting skills but also emphasises on what you are doing right as a parent."

Parent of Super Sibs participant

"Thank you so much for this!! I can vouch how extremely beneficial your service is towards Super Sibs. The benefits of these workshops cannot be described in words! Your work is amazing... please continue to spread this awareness and the love of supersibs!"

Parent of Super Sibs participant

INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY LIVING MONITORING SERVICE

The Independent Community Living Monitoring (ICLM) Service within Aġenzija Support directs its resources towards providing support and follow-up to individuals with disabilities and their families in Malta and Gozo who receive financial subsidies to secure personal assistance from a chosen caregiver. These services are designed to enable individuals with disabilities to lead independent lives within their communities while ensuring they receive proactive and responsive support tailored to their specific needs.

The ICLM team is dedicated to guaranteeing that service users receive the most effective form of assistance, ensuring their right to a higher quality of life is fully attained and live independently within the community. It holds paramount the values of dignity, human resilience and individual needs.

Upon assessment indicating that the service user would benefit from the Independent Community Living (ICL) Service, a professional will meticulously compile a comprehensive report

outlining the service user's specific needs for the ICL report. Upon finalisation, the designated professional will then support the service user in presenting the case before an autonomous Board. This Board will thoroughly evaluate the presented case and make a decision to approve or reject the request. Upon approval and commencement of service, the ICLM team will diligently monitor and follow up on the case. Monthly claim sheets will be carefully reviewed and processed by the Finance team.

PROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE ICLM TEAM

- Monitor the current situation of individuals receiving financial subsidies to procure hours of personal assistance.
- Conduct comprehensive needs assessments and recommending service delivery (needed hours) based on identified needs.
- Conduct thorough assessments that can also be utilised by other services particularly supported independent living and respite services. This reduces waiting times for these services, decreases bureaucracy and minimises duplication.
- Refer service users to additional support services such as housing assistance and food banks.

**112 NEW
REQUESTS FOR
SERVICE WERE
RECEIVED BY
THE ICLM TEAM
IN 2023**



- Advocate for service users by engaging with other professionals and supporting them in various situations including hospital appointments, educational planning and more.

The surge in requests for ICL Service was seen as particularly stemming from families facing challenges related to minors exhibiting behaviour of concern or struggling to meet daily life expectations due to the limitations brought about by their disabilities. This also reflects a growing willingness among individuals with disabilities and their families to explore community-based services such as ICL, aiming for independent living within the community rather than opting for quicker but less integrated solutions. This trend is also aligned with the principles outlined in the UNCRPD and resonates with the vision and mission of the Agency.

MINORS (0-17)	YOUNG ADULTS (18-35)	ADULTS (36 ONWARDS)
175	100	108

Table 3: Number of service users who benefitted from ICLM services in 2023

WAY FORWARD

The future plans for the ICLM team are to continue working with a resolute commitment to delivering excellence in service to the Agency's service users, tailored to their specific needs and ensure they can enjoy a high quality of life within their community. Additionally, the team will be dedicated to actively implement the Agency's strategy, that of moving away from institutionalisation, prioritising community-based support and empowering individuals to thrive in their own homes and community.



**383 SERVICE
USERS
BENEFITTED
FROM SUPPORT
AND MONITORING
IN 2023**

TESTIMONIALS

"I found Agenzija Support services very useful. Thanks to my personal assistant, I have gained more independence. The monthly meeting I have with my key worker from Agenzija Support also shows me that they care and I feel reassured knowing that there is someone checking over my well-being. I am also planning to start driving lessons on a modified vehicle soon which is a service Agenzija Support offers, so to gain more independence."

**Kurt Tonna, service user,
Independent Community Living Service**

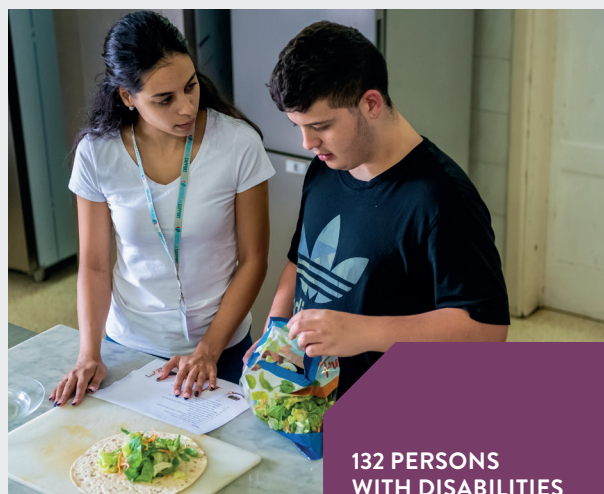
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICE

Occupational Therapy is a client-centred health profession concerned with promoting health and well-being through occupation. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in everyday life activities. Occupational Therapists achieve this outcome by working with people and communities to enhance their ability to engage in the occupations they want to, need to, or are expected to do or by modifying the occupation or the environment to better support their occupational engagement (World Federation of Occupational Therapists, 2012).

The team follows persons with disabilities ranging between the ages of 16 and 60 years. Occupational Therapists at Aġenzija Sapport are community-based therapists utilising a community practice approach. Persons making use of the service can be either service users who are already benefitting from other Aġenzija Sapport services or other persons with disabilities who are referred from the community. Persons with disabilities can be self-referred, or referred by their guardians, families or other professionals.

Apart from the one-on-one interventions, Occupational Therapists deliver various training sessions to the Agency's employees, including Non-Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention (NAPPI) Training, Autism and SPELL, Person-Centred Active Support, Understanding our Senses and training on the enhancement of independence through the use of adaptive equipment and feeding. During the year under review, one of the team members also provided Autism Training to several Police Officers, with the involvement of an autistic person. Other training delivered focused on enriching staff's knowledge about different occupations through practical sessions.

Furthermore, the Occupational Therapists within the team are most often consulted in the planning of services by the Agency mostly to ensure access of different environments, those physical and sensorial. They are also involved in facilitating assessments within different services.



**132 PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES
BENEFITTED FROM
THE AGENCY'S
OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICE
IN 2023**

Occupational Therapists are also committed to mentor students while on placement from the Faculty of Health Sciences and organise orientation sessions to Occupational Therapy students. They advocate for community practice within the profession through the participation in different taskforce working groups on a national level.



WAY FORWARD

The Occupational Therapy professionals together with the Young Adults' Social Work Team, started working on an Independent Living Project which is in line with the UNCRPD, the National Strategy for Persons with Disability and Aġenzija Support's strategy. This project aims to help young adults with disabilities gain further skills to live a more independent life. It also aims to be a step forward to those young adults who wish to leap into living independently in the community and improve their quality of life as adults with rights and responsibilities.

The project is in its planning stage and in 2024 it aims to move to its implementation where these young adults will be given an opportunity to experience independence and will be assisted in gaining autonomy. Additionally, in 2024, the Occupational Therapists will continue working towards increasing more awareness about their profession.



TESTIMONIALS

"Before I started using the service, I had a tough time with getting around and doing my daily tasks. Then, the Occupational Therapist did an assessment and we talked about what could help. We built a good relationship, so I felt comfortable sharing my needs with her. The Occupational Therapist suggested using a shower commode to make things easier for me. This was really beneficial for me as I didn't have to do as many transfers and I could do basic things like bathing more comfortably. Additionally, it made getting around my house a lot easier since it's pretty restricted in space."

***Rita Sammut Cassar, service user,
Occupational Therapy Service***

"Thanks to the occupational therapy sessions, I'm catching the bus on my own, a task that once seemed difficult. These sessions have boosted my confidence and also improved my overall well-being. I've noticed significant improvements in my daily routines, all thanks to the practical strategies I've learned. Most importantly, attending these sessions has become important, as they make me feeling more capable and empowered."

***Deborah Maria Randisi, service user,
Occupational Therapy Service***

SHARING LIVES

The Sharing Lives Service provides service users the possibility to have social contact with a volunteer, engage in group activities with their peers and participate in cultural, sports and other informal educational programmes. Sharing Lives values human potential and believes that persons with disabilities have a right to live a full life.

Launched in April 2017, the service has since created several new opportunities both locally and abroad for service users. This involved different creative spaces where service users could socialise with others, learn and experience new things and enjoy themselves.

2023

- 56 new referrals
- 231 active service users
- 131 activities
- 44 volunteers
- 5 service users with one-to-one social contact

ACTIVITIES

- Rowing sessions
- Life skills programme
- Cooking skills programme
- Boomerang Music Festival
- Project Arc – mixed ability group for social responsibility
- Outdoor art activities
- Halloween and Carnival parties
- BBQ night
- Self-advocacy group
- Dream catcher outdoor activity
- Two youth exchanges to Sweden and Switzerland
- Leisure trip to Sicily
- Crafts programme

The team also introduced a number of informal morning sessions. This will be explored further in 2024.

**139 VOLUNTEERS
WITH SHARING
LIVES SINCE 2017**





COLLABORATIONS

During the period under review, Sharing Lives has collaborated with a number of public and private entities including the University Rowing Club, Lands Authority and Aġenzija Żgħażaġh. The latter has offered a number of formative sessions to Sharing Lives service users and such collaboration will be invested in for a bigger project to reach out to more young people. Other joint initiatives were also held in collaboration with other Aġenzija Support teams such as Community Services and the Way to Work Programme.

Moreover, Sharing Lives continued to network and partner up with other organisations around Europe to provide more international opportunities for service users. In 2023, Sharing Lives was involved in two youth exchanges: one set in Sweden and another in Switzerland tackling the topics of digitisation,

inclusion and performing arts. In these projects, the service saw the participation of 14 service users and four volunteers. The service also embarked on a bigger EU project entitled “It Starts With Me!”. This project will see a two-year partnership with six European organisations from Malta, Sweden, Spain, Slovenia, Greece and Italy, all working with persons with disabilities, aimed to empower them to facilitate and lead workshops. The project also aims at creating an accessible research platform.

The Service also offered volunteering experiences to five young people from Europe through the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), a project funded under the EU. Together with these ESC volunteers, Sharing Lives managed to create several creative activities and projects. In fact, Cooking Circle was one of the projects that an ESC volunteer spearheaded and was continued by other local volunteers following the departure of this ESC volunteer.

TESTIMONIALS

"I am a member of the Support Sharing Lives group. I am mostly involved and participate in social activities which I greatly appreciate because otherwise I don't have any friends or any opportunities to socialise. I was also invited to attend various conferences where I actively participated and which, in my opinion, need to be held in places of work to foster acceptance of persons with disabilities at work."

Justin Spiteri, service user, Sharing Lives

"I volunteer with Agenzija Support, including the Friday groups for young people with different abilities. My objective is to be a friend to these young people and treat them with respect and dignity, supporting them in learning new skills, passing on positive messages, enhancing teamwork and building their confidence. During my volunteering experience, I participated in a range of activities, including games, mobile photography, managing finances and online safety, organised outings and parties. Part of my tasks is to help the service users be more outgoing, share what is happening in their lives, discuss any issues and engage in several discussions on different topics. From the engagement I have with them, I can visualise and sense the positive impact on their lives and they fill my life with so much joy and gratitude. I feel blessed to have them in my life... Volunteering with persons with disabilities has been a rewarding experience for years now. It has helped me to be more open and share my time, talents and energy with so many different persons, I would encourage anyone interested in volunteering to give it a try."

Scarlett Avalone, volunteer, Sharing Lives



**14 SERVICE USERS
AND 4 VOLUNTEERS
PARTICIPATED IN 2
YOUTH EXCHANGES
IN 2023**

WAY FORWARD

2024 will be mostly marked by the restructuring of the service with a focus on strengthening its existing community of volunteers. The objective is to invest more in the abilities of these volunteers so that they can be more on the forefront of what they do by leading programmes and projects themselves with the support of professionals.

Moreover, the Service will continue its effort to engage service users more in what it does through coproduction and empowering them to take leading roles. This will be done both at local level and also through European projects that the Agency is involved in with other European partners.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

During the year 2023, Community Services strengthened the development and service delivery by defining the key elements of its eligibility criteria. The service is being provided to individuals who are experiencing social difficulties, requiring further monitoring by the professionals involved.

Following the referral procedure by the service user's Social Worker, an initial assessment is conducted and in collaboration with the service user, guardians and professionals involved, an Individual Support Plan (ISP) is outlined. Allocated hours may be utilised to deliver sessions based on skills building to carry out meaningful and purposeful activities aimed at leading an independent life. The service collaborates with other entities and professionals. Having such interconnected skills and resources facilitates the creation of a proactive approach to support and empower the rights and responsibilities of service users. This is promoted by understanding the combination of different factors including the individuals' skills, abilities, limitations, environment, support networks and plans for the future.

Over the past year, the service continued to consolidate its objectives. One way of presenting this consolidation was to work on the rebranding of the service, since it did not seem to facilitate an understanding of the current service provision any longer. The new identity will reflect the importance of ensuring that persons with disabilities have the right opportunities to develop and enhance their skills and be active members within the community.

The team carried out an in-depth examination of the service to represent a rich insight that unveils the distinct patterns and areas for strategic focus. Three main themes emerged which are shown in Figure 2.

The statistical breakdown in Table 4 provides not only a snapshot of the Community Services team but also a blueprint

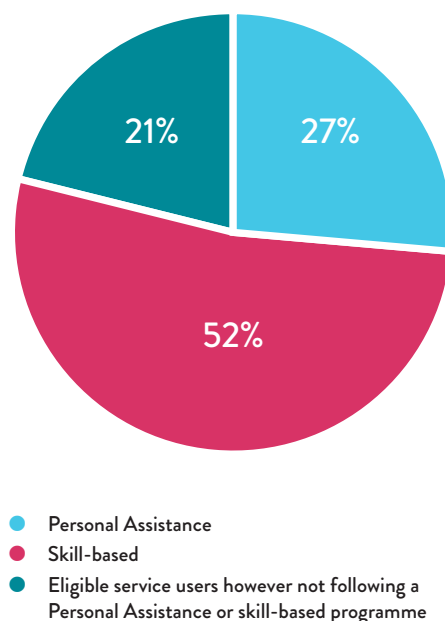


Figure 2: Provision of service delivery, Community Services 2023

for strategic enhancements. The overarching trends emphasise a collective commitment to skill development, individualised support and an integrated approach. Such recognition of individual strengths and opportunities for improvement enhances ongoing refinement and innovation, ensuring that the Community Services continue to evolve and meet the evolving needs of the service users.



AS AT DECEMBER 2023, A TOTAL OF **105 SERVICE USERS** BENEFITTED FROM COMMUNITY SERVICES IN MALTA AND GOZO

OVER 2,400 HOURS OF SERVICE PER WEEK WERE DELIVERED IN 2023

	PERSONAL ASSISTANCE	SKILL-BASED PROGRAMMES	BOTH PERSONAL ASSISTANCE & SKILL-BASED PROGRAMMES	MONITORING	UTILISING PERSONAL ASSISTANCE ONLY
Executive A	16 service users	22 service users	14 service users	4 service users	2 service users
Executive B	4 service users	16 service users	–	9 service users	–
Executive C	5 service users	11 service users	2 service users	2 service users	–
Executive D	4 service users	8 service users	–	8 service users	–

Table 4: Provisional services according to needs and goals presented and observed across the four Support Executives within the Community Services team

N.B. The total number of service users remains 105, since service users may be benefitting from more than one service / programme at a time and thus the numbers provided in Table 4 should not be added together.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- An annual meeting with service users, families and / or guardians, providing a safe space where concerns, suggestions and constructive feedback can be shared, was introduced. Such meeting was held with the aim of providing an overview of the changes happening within the service, service updates and an opportunity to meet and discuss with the team members. The overarching aim was to ease communication and service delivery. Attendees provided positive feedback and shared mutual experiences of feeling supported and understood.
- As part of the consolidating process of the Service's eligibility criteria, a number of service users were assisted to transition to other services which were considered to be more beneficial to the individual's needs.
- Team members were provided with various training opportunities including on the prevention and management of behaviour of concerns, mental health well-being, appropriate moving and handling techniques, autism and epilepsy. A number of Support Workers and professionals within the team also had the opportunity to attend a training experience in Estonia.
- Further works were carried out to continue the renovation of the community hubs in Rabat and Żurrieq.



WAY FORWARD

- Consolidation of services in Malta and Gozo according to need.
- Modification of documents and assessments in accordance with the present procedure and eligibility criteria.
- Set up an administration team to develop further strategies in relation to schedules, timesheets, collection of data and training.
- Cultivate a diverse network of professionals for the possibility of sharing more expertise and knowledge, with the possibility to collaborate in future projects.
- More training opportunities and mentoring in UNCRPD, coproduction, Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and Active Support.

TESTIMONIALS

“My son is a visually impaired young person who has embarked on a transformative journey towards independence. In just a few sessions, his courage blossomed and his confidence soared, as he embraced the use of his cane, a symbol of newfound independence. Guided by the team's dedicated Support Worker, his progress extended beyond the sessions, earning school recognition for marked improvements. Collaborating with school seniors and a Social Worker, the service adapted his Individual Support Plan to align with his career aspirations.”

Parent of service user

WAY TO WORK PROGRAMME

The Way to Work Programme is a service that assists persons with disabilities to strengthen or progress their skills for employment. The service aims to correlate with other service providers and programmes reaching the same aim, which is to have more persons with disabilities in the workforce. This programme focuses on preparation of persons with disabilities to enter the labour market by supporting them in becoming more confident in seeking employment and living more independently.

The service is being offered through various skill-based support, such as group training, one-to-one sessions, job searching training and the Parents' Focus Groups.

Following the service launch in mid-2022 and the first group cohort back in November 2022, the service has been continuously developing. It is currently offering the fourth cohort in Malta, whilst another cohort was offered in Gozo during the year under review.

Group training consists of a seven-month programme on different topics such as conflict at the place of work, interview skills, rights and responsibilities and money and time management.

The programme tackles different job options in sectors such as cleaning, laundry, office, catering, factory and others and includes site visits to different companies, having workshops practicing the different job options and also internal practicals when possible. For further knowledge, various speakers and professionals are invited to share their knowledge by giving informative talks to the service users on their particular areas such as Gemma project, Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA), Life Long Learning and others.

The service is also open for individuals who require specific skills development, such as public transport training, boundaries at the place of work, preparing a healthy lunch, writing a CV and others. These one-to-one sessions support persons who are seeking employment or who are already in employment but require extra assistance in certain areas.

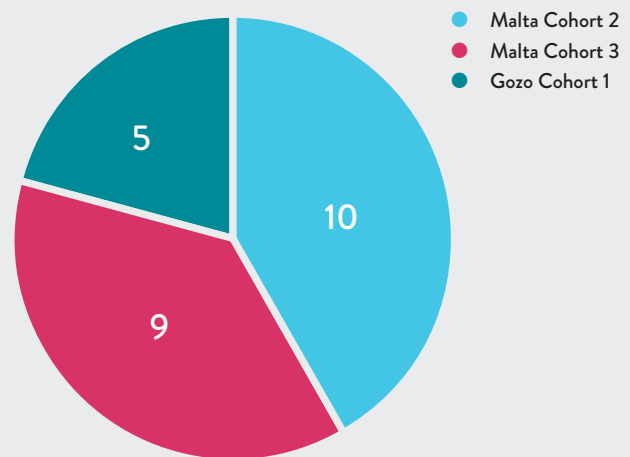


Figure 3: Number of new participants per Way to Work Programme group cohort in Malta and Gozo in 2023

**31 SERVICE
USERS RECEIVED
ONE-TO-ONE
SESSIONS IN 2023**

In the year 2023, the Way to Work team started to offer job searching training. This is provided to individuals who require support in how to use job searching platforms, how to apply for jobs online, how to write an email and how to send a CV by email. This training is offered on a period of six regular meetups of 2.5 hours per session and is held as hands-on practice to ensure that persons with a disabilities practice this task independently.

Parents' Focus Groups are sessions offered to parents whereby they have a safe space to discuss their concerns and needs together with other parents / guardians going through similar experiences. This assists the professionals in communicating with parents / guardians on important topics such as how to help their child in applying for jobs, the importance of boundaries, tips on how to help their child improve certain skills and the importance of independent living.

Other main achievements in 2023 included coproduction with service users particularly when it came to representing the Agency during career expos and also on media programmes promoting the service and the importance and right of employment for persons with disabilities.



12 PARTICIPANTS
ATTENDED THE
JOB SEARCHING
TRAINING
GROUPS IN 2023

17 PARENTS
ATTENDED THE
PARENTS' FOCUS
GROUPS IN 2023



CONFERENCES AND MOBILITIES

- The Way to Work team hosted a Norwegian delegation for five days in February 2023, which focused on employment inclusion.
- One professional attended a conference on “Tools for Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship” by the Youth@Work of Erasmus+ in San Lorenzo, Spain.
- Way to Work team attended a job-shadowing experience in Norway in November 2023.

Members of the team also attended the Final Conference on “EU Agenda for Adult Learning in Malta”, the Conference on the National Strategy on Disability and other local and international webinars.

WAY FORWARD

- Expanding the Way to Work training within the Agency’s Day Centres.
- More collaboration with different professionals such as Occupational Therapists to continuously refine and develop the service.
- Focus on one-to-one sessions in Gozo.
- More media exposure to emphasise and create further awareness in regard to the involvement of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

TESTIMONIALS

“I was referred to the Way to Work Programme as I was seeking employment but I wished to improve my skills first. I am learning different aspects such as time management and self-assessment. I recommend this training to others as it really helps you prepare yourself for work and no one should give up.”

Participant, Way to Work Programme

“I am currently attending the Way to Work training sessions. This training programme is helping me to learn how to make use of the public transport, health and safety at the workplace, how to deal with conflict, my behaviour at the workplace and my relationship with others. This experience also helped me make new friends. I recommend the Way to Work Programme to others.”

Participant, Way to Work Programme

“Last April our son Samuel joined the Way to Work Programme offered by Aġenzija Sapport. After a long series of courses, rejections and staying at home, we felt apprehensive at first about this course. Now as the course has ended, we can say that this experience was worthwhile and our sacrifices were not in vain. We feel that Samuel benefitted a lot. He matured a little more, gained knowledge, made new friends and his fear of being again rejected lessened a lot. He gained more confidence in himself. We find that the team catered for all his and his peers needs with determination and love. We hope that with the help of this course, Samuel will be in a better position to find work that is most suitable for him.”

Parent of Way to Work Programme participant

“Attending Way to Work Programme one-to-one sessions has enabled Maruska to improve her numerical and alphabetical sequencing that would be essential with regards to filing of invoices and documents. While practicing office-related duties, she continued to reinforce the skills she already had gained from MCAST. She also gained confidence in herself and was shown how and encouraged to apply for work.”

Parent of Way to Work Programme participant

DAY SERVICES

The aim of the Day Services within Aġenzija Support is to enhance community inclusion and provide service users with the opportunity to develop diverse skills through varied programmes offered within the centres themselves and through collaborations with other services and entities outside of the Agency.

SERVICE USERS

During the year under review, the service users have remained at the centre of the running and development of the service. Although the annual case reviews and service user feedback sessions continued, the team strived to continue exploring new initiatives that not only helped develop service users' skills but also provided new community-based opportunities. These initiatives ranged from the ongoing collaboration with Special Olympics Malta, the participation in several local community events and markets and the opening of KreAzzjoni. KreAzzjoni, a space in the heart of Valletta, serves as a showcase and a retail outlet for artisanal items created by service users. Here, the service users did not only develop employability skills, but were also given the opportunity to showcase and talk about the items they created to tourists and other customers who visited KreAzzjoni. This presented the opportunity for the Agency to promote the service users to a diverse and wide mainstream audience.

The ongoing collaborations with various entities and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have provided opportunities for service users to develop skills such as music and drama, through collaborations with Villa Bianca and Opening Doors respectively. Physical activity was also a priority through the collaboration with Special Olympics Malta. This collaboration saw 250 service users participating in the Motor Activities Training Programme (MATP), 80 service users training bocce and a further 20 service users training in swimming. Through this collaboration, 250 service users participated in the MATP day, which was also promoted on international platforms. Anne Marie Azzopardi, a service user,

**OVER 70 SERVICE
USERS WERE
ALSO INVOLVED
IN THE RUNNING
AND OPERATING
OF KREAZZJONI**





was given the opportunity to participate in the Granollers 2023 swimming races in Spain. Another service user, Nevice Grech, was also selected as the female bocce athlete representing Malta in the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin. Ms. Grech went on to win the Gold medal for the female bocce doubles and the Bronze medal for the female bocce singles category.

All service users benefitted from the FitFeet programme through the Healthy Athlete programme through Special Olympics Malta and also dental screening as part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Faculty of Dental Surgery within the University of Malta (UOM).

Self-advocacy is another principle that Day Services is aimed at developing and cultivating as the foundation of service

delivery. With this in mind, a Service User Council, having four different participating centres, was set up. Over the year, this Council has had regular meetings and has also organised its first event.

More efforts were embarked on in 2023 to be more present within mainstream settings.

- A flashmob was organised in Valletta by Fleur-de-Lys Day Centre.
- A collaboration with the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement and participation in the national Europride flashmob.
- Participation in various local markets both in Malta and in Gozo.
- Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq Day Centre set up a car wash led and manned by service users, open to the public.



- A service user was also given the opportunity to travel to Padova for training on voluntary work engagement as part of an EU-funded project.
- Hal Far Day Centre also started preparations for participation in the national Carnival dance show to be held in February 2024.

STAFF

In 2023, more focus was placed on staff motivation through individual meetings and the planning of a staff away day for all Day Services employees. Staff were also given regular supervision sessions and training including NAPPI, Mental Health First Aid, Autism and SPELL framework and moving and handling.

Furthermore, emphasis was placed on having an increased management presence within all centres and one-to-one

33 TEAM MEETINGS AND EIGHT THINK DAYS WERE ORGANISED FOR DAY SERVICES STAFF IN 2023

meetings with all employees. Through these meetings, various initiatives brought forward by the staff were worked on and implemented. Members from the management team were also given the opportunity to travel abroad and observe international practices, as a means of continuing to develop perspectives on how to expand and diversify the service. A presentation on the integration of MATP in Day Services operations was also given at the MATP forum during the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin.

OTHER PROJECTS

Throughout 2023, Day Services in collaboration with the Projects Department continued working on improving the physical environments of all day centres, in line with the latest Health and Safety regulations. Significant works in 2023 included:

- Upgrading of the Independent Living Unit in Hal Far Day Centre.
- Works for the installation of a new lift in Mtarfa Resource Centre.
- Modernisation of furniture across a number of centres.
- Continued work on the infrastructure at the basement level of Mtarfa Day Centre.
- Improvement of internet service and provision across all centres.
- Continued planning and work on the extension of the Ghajnsielem Learning Hub in Gozo.

SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICE

The Supported Independent Living (SIL) Service provides support within personalised living accommodation in the community. The aim of these living accommodations is to enhance and promote the autonomy, inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities through a person-centred plan. The rights of persons with disabilities to engage in self-advocacy, active participation in the community, self-determination and coproduction lie at the centre of the service.

Throughout 2023, the service's focus was to improve these elements and enhance the experience of the service users through empowering practices. This was done through the following accomplishments:

- 15 service users travelled abroad on their personal request and wish to experience Disneyland in Paris, France. This was a long-held wish for some and an opportunity to have fun and engage in new experiences for all.
- One service user participated in an international cooking competition in Croatia called Cupid's Spoon, after winning the Malta's competition round and thus represented Malta. This was an innovative and empowering experience for the service user who participated in a European competition amongst a number of other persons with disability.
- Service users participated in various leisure activities including Summerdaze Festival, various weekend breaks in local hotels and some travelled to Sicily.
- A pilot project was initiated, empowering two service users who wish to live more independently in the community through the support of a multidisciplinary team. Two different options are currently being explored whereby one can be supported towards living in an apartment in the community for independent living or to access a transitional placement that would help the service user gain independent living skills, seek employment and be supported to build a social network, required for future independent living opportunities.



- Five service users were engaged within recruitment processes for the selection of new part-time Support Workers and for the selection of Support Workers accompanying them abroad. This process has confirmed the knowledge and expertise that service users can present when making decisions pertaining to the services they receive.
- The professionals within SIL were provided with various workshops related to their specific work to enhance job knowledge.
- A number of workshop sessions were also held with service users as an opportunity for self-advocacy and coproduction. These involved discussions about service improvement and direction of service.
- An upkeep of areas within Dar il-Fjuri and Villino Maria residential accommodations took place to ensure that the residences are up to standard and provide a homely environment.

WAY FORWARD

The SIL Service aims to continue working towards deinstitutionalisation and to ensure persons with disabilities are provided with the opportunity to live in the community with the right amount of support and according to their individual needs and wishes. This means that the service is working to develop further opportunities for independent living for persons with disabilities and residences tailored to support the needs of individuals who require higher levels of support, including those with behaviour of concern. In the upcoming year, efforts will be made to continue working towards:

- Deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities living within group homes through empowering practices, individualised services, community re-integration and services based on coproduction.
- Deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities living within group homes through the provision and choice of small apartments in the community that enable them to live more independently, with other peers of their choice and at the location of their choice.
- Solidifying partnerships with the Housing Authority to facilitate the rental of apartments for persons with disabilities.
- Consolidating the professional and management teams of SIL to be able to provide a more integrated and centralised service.



TESTIMONIALS

“I’ve been living at Dar il-Fjuri for over three years and last year, for the first time, I had an opportunity to travel with Aġenzija Sappurt to Paris. During May and June, we had several meetings before we went abroad so myself and the other service users get to know each other before we go to Paris... this experience was fun and exciting since I never went there before...I also had the opportunity to travel to Croatia and Rome. It all started when I participated in the competition Cupid Spoon in Valletta where we had to prepare a dish along with some cocktails. I managed to place first and I went to Croatia to compete with representatives from other European Countries, where I made it to the finals. This experience was very exciting since I met different people who I didn’t know before. One of the participants that I had the pleasure to meet was from Romania and I loved spending time with them and get to know them. At the end of the competition, we travelled to Rome and got to see the Pope and also cooked for passers by. I can say that in 2023 I had the opportunity to experience different experiences that I never did before and I learnt from these experiences while I also had fun.”

Margaret Xerri, service user, Supported Independent Living Service

NGOs SERVICES

The NGOs Services Department is responsible for the monitoring of Public Social Partnership (PSP) agreements between NGOs and the Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV), as well as contracts with private entities. The Department continues to monitor and support the residences, respite services and day programmes falling under their remit, to ensure that service users and their families are receiving adequate support and are benefitting fully from the services they receive.

PSP AGREEMENT	SERVICE PROVIDER	NUMBER OF SERVICE USERS COVERED WITH PSPS IN 2023
Dar l-Arcipriet Degabriele	Fondazzjoni Nazareth	10
Dar Madre Tereża	Fondazzjoni Nazareth	10
Dar Nazareth	Fondazzjoni Nazareth	10
Dar il-Wens	Fondazzjoni Wens	24
Dar Merħba	Fondazzjoni Wens	16
Dar L-Abilità	Fondazzjoni Wens	4
Dar Arka Residential	Fondazzjoni Arka	15
Dar Arka Respite	Fondazzjoni Arka	17
Dar il-Ġublew tal-Ħniena	Fondazzjoni Arka	5
Dar Madonna ta' Pinu	Fondazzjoni Arka	5
Akkwarell	Dar tal-Providenza	3
Dar Pirotta	Dar tal-Providenza	11
Shalom	Dar tal-Providenza	5
Żerniq	Dar tal-Providenza	4
Dar Bjorn - Żebbuġ	ALS Malta Foundation	30
Dar Bjorn - Qormi	ALS Malta Foundation	13
Dar il-Kaptan Respite	Dar il-Kaptan	229
Dar il-Kaptan Day Programme	Dar il-Kaptan	229
Malta Autism Centre		40
Embrace Diversity		50
TOTALS		730

Table 5: PSP agreements and service users in 2023

Throughout 2023, the NGOs team continued reviewing referrals of new service users who required service for either a residential placement in one of the NGO homes or those requiring respite services or day programmes. Case reviews for residential service users continued to be held to ensure that service users are being supported through a person-centred plan, which supports these individuals to work towards their goals and aspirations.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- New agreement signed with ALS Malta Foundation covering new Dar Bjorn in Żebbuġ and another agreement with Dar tal-Providenza for Żerniq.
- A new contract with HILA services has been signed for the provision of services specialised for minors and young adults within Dar Santa Rosa.
- In line with the UNCRPD and the concept of deinstitutionalisation, the NGO team worked on how this process can be implemented on different levels. Starting off with the referral system, the team identified a new set of eligibility criteria and a detailed referral form and introduced a prioritisation checklist to increase visibility of urgency and need.
- The NGO Services team held a number of planned visits as well as spot checks in various services within its remit. The aim of such visits was to check in with the service users, identify areas for improvement and put forward recommendations on how to improve the service as well as enhance the service users' quality of life.
- The team assisted a number of individuals and their families by providing emergency respite services when a crisis was encountered.
- Through improvement of internal operating procedures, the team also managed to reduce the waiting time for an assessment to be conducted within two months.

The NGO team also carries out assessments for service users who utilise HILA residential and respite services whilst also monitoring the services provided.

THE NGO
DEPARTMENT
CARRIED OUT
AROUND 200
ASSESSMENTS
FOR NEW SERVICE
USERS IN 2023

WAY FORWARD

In 2024, the NGO Services team shall continue with its commitment towards ensuring an effective service is delivered to service users and their family members. This is to be done by:

- Embarking on an exercise to collect feedback regarding the level of satisfaction with each NGO service falling within its remit, ensuring that service users and their families are satisfied and highlighting any need for improvement.
- Working on PSP agreements due for renewal.
- Continuing to advocate for independent living within the community and putting forward recommendations in line with deinstitutionalisation.
- Increasing spot checks within the services monitored by the NGO Services team to ensure that services being provided are up to standard and in alignment with the PSP and UNCRPD principles.
- Working on more planned visits and case reviews to ensure good quality of service provision within the NGO services under the Department's remit.
- Carrying out more respite assessments and ensuring that no assessment takes longer than two months to be conducted and processed.
- Promoting respite services as well as provide emergency respite services when crises are encountered to ensure adequate support is provided to both the service users and the care providers.

HELPLINE

The aim of the Helpline, the main point of contact for services and schemes related to disability provided by the Agency, is to provide the best quality of service to persons with disabilities who make use of Agencija Sapport's services, their relatives, prospective service users and other stakeholders.

Now in its third year of operation, the Helpline has handled a total of 15,208 tickets since its start until the end of 2023. During the year under review, 4,626 tickets were created. Managed by the Customer Support, Schemes and Day Services Department, it is operated by Helpline Officers who are trained to skilfully provide information and assistance regarding the range of services and schemes offered by the Agency. All communication is treated with the utmost importance and confidentiality.

Through the dedicated Helpline system, the team gathers and maintains a clear and current picture of service users' and relatives' requests and aspects that could be ameliorated. Through such insight, the Helpline also provides the Agency with valuable data for future planning.

During 2023, the Helpline team commenced its efforts to amalgamate its work with that of the reception team. Throughout the year, there was a focus on updating the internal systems to prepare for the arrangements which will be needed when both teams strengthen their work as one. The current reception system was also updated to record daily statistics reflecting the number of calls and visitors the team receives. Both the Helpline and the reception systems are now equipped to provide the Agency with an accurate picture of the number of customers that are supported and which channel they are using.



TESTIMONIALS

"I am very satisfied with the Helpline service; whenever I phone to request information about a scheme or to check about the service that I am receiving from Agencija Sapport, I can be sure that my query will be handled to the full."

Customer, Sapport Helpline

ACCESSIBILITY UNIT

Operating as part of the Customer Support, Schemes and Day Services Department, the newly-formed Accessibility Unit administers the Blue Badge and EU Disability Card services.

BLUE BADGE

The Blue Badge service was launched by Aġenzja Sappor in March 2022, whereby the service was transitioned from the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) to the Agency. The Blue Badge is a legal document aimed at facilitating parking on reserved parking bays for persons with disabilities and mobility impairments.

The main aim of the Blue Badge is to facilitate independent living for persons with disabilities. Since its launch in 2022, the Department has provided this service to over 4,000 applicants.

The Blue Badge team also works in collaboration with CRPD in relation to enforcement, whereby 35 cases were reviewed over reported abuse and a total of 13 Blue Badges were revoked. The team also liaises with Transport Malta in relation to Personalised Reserved Parking applications, offering its services with regard to the respective medical assessments.



**2,973 BLUE
BADGES** WERE
ISSUED IN 2023,
INCLUDING NEW
AND RENEWED
DOCUMENTS

EU DISABILITY CARD

The EU Disability Card service was transferred from CRPD to Aġenzija Sapport in November 2023 and thus the Accessibility Unit was launched, offering both the EU Disability Card and the Blue Badge services. The EU Disability Card is an initiative which was piloted across eight EU member states, including Malta, in 2015.

The aim of the card is to allow persons with disabilities travelling to other participating EU member states to show that they have a certified disability status in their home member state and to access related benefits offered to persons with disabilities in each member state, including their own.

**381 EU
DISABILITY
CARDS WERE
ISSUED IN
NOVEMBER –
DECEMBER 2023**

AĠENZIJJA SAPPORT EU DISABILITY CARD

[HOME](#) [ORGANISATIONS](#) [ABOUT THE CARD](#) [GET OR RENEW CARD](#) [ABOUT THE PROJECT](#) [CONTACT](#) [LINKS](#)

The EU Disability Card

For benefits in Malta and
participating EU countries



PEOPLE ASSISTANCE SCHEMES

The People Assistance Schemes (PAS) Department provides financial assistance that, together with other Aġenzija Support services, enables and empowers persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community.

In 2023, the range of PAS was strengthened with the addition of two new schemes.

List of schemes administered by the PAS team:

1. **Empowerment Scheme**
2. **Vehicle Road Licence Exemption Scheme**
3. **Vehicle Registration Tax Exemption Scheme**
4. **Drive from Wheelchair Vehicle Grant**
5. **Grant on Modified, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (previously owned and registered in Malta)**

Furthermore, the PAS team works in liaison with the Office of the Commissioner for Revenue in regard to the Grant on the Purchase of Special Equipment for use by persons with disabilities, whereby the team assists those applicants who want to apply for this scheme but are unable to post their application online.

HIGHLIGHTS

- New directorship assigned to the PAS team. It now forms part of the Customer Support, Schemes and Day Services Department.
 - The scanning and storage of applications and files related to the vehicle-related schemes were finalised. With the aid of a new specialised scanner, the scanning process continued throughout the year and files were adequately stored accordingly.
 - Two new schemes were added on to the PAS Service. The criteria for these schemes were drawn up together with a new pertinent application form being launched.
- Work commenced on the Empowerment Scheme reform. Meetings and discussions were held with the respective Board's members. Some amendments in the criteria were proposed together with changes to the respective application and professional report. Such reform was implemented by October 2023.

1. EMPOWERMENT SCHEME

Aġenzija Support operates the Empowerment Scheme which aims to provide financial assistance to persons with disabilities enabling them to purchase assistive equipment and which would allow them to lead a more independent life within their own home and locality.

The Empowerment Scheme is run by an independent Board which includes a number of professionals, who meet once a month to assess and evaluate all applications received during that period.

The Empowerment Scheme also offers subsidy on individualised transport services to persons with disabilities who are not able to make use of public transport and would need to go to work, attend a post-secondary education institution or attend sports training whereby the applicant is enrolled as a member with a registered sports club / organisation.

TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPROVED APPLICATIONS	TOTAL FUNDS APPROVED BY BOARD
1,385	1,361	€782,092 *

Table 6: Empowerment Scheme applications and funds,
January – December 2023

* This sum may contain funds which were approved during 2022 but availed of during 2023.

Applications for hearing aids	956
Applications for transport subsidy	27 (including 24 renewals)
Applications for assistive equipment (including wheelchairs, hoists, motorised beds, pressure relief mattresses, motor scooters, prosthesis, recliners, stair climbers, K-walkers, standing frames, sara steady, car modifications and repairs on equipment)	378

Table 7: Empowerment Scheme applications,
January – December 2023

2. VEHICLE ROAD LICENSE EXEMPTION SCHEME

The Vehicle Road License Exemption Scheme allows persons with disabilities or their parents / carers to be either partially or fully exempted from paying the annual road license, depending on the age of the vehicle.

761 APPLICANTS
BENEFITTED
FROM ROAD
LICENSE
EXEMPTION
IN 2023

149 APPLICANTS
BENEFITTED FROM
REGISTRATION TAX
EXEMPTION IN 2023

3. VEHICLE REGISTRATION TAX EXEMPTION SCHEME

The aim of this scheme is to provide support and financial assistance to persons with disabilities and their families to acquire a means of transportation suitable for their needs.

4. DRIVE FROM WHEELCHAIR VEHICLE GRANT

This scheme offers a grant on vehicles that are strictly drive-from-wheelchair. This means that the vehicle shall have an electric ramp at the back where a wheelchair driver can access it with the wheelchair and position themselves in front of the steering wheel to drive the vehicle.

The grant provided through this scheme is of 20% on the cost of the vehicle of up to €60,000 in value. This total value excludes all taxes and registration costs. This is a one-time subsidy. This means that those vehicles which already benefitted from such schemes, will not be eligible again.

5. GRANT ON MODIFIED, WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

This scheme offers a grant on vehicles that were previously owned and registered in Malta and which are modified with a wheelchair accessible ramp and / or lift. The grant provided through this scheme is of 10% on the cost of the vehicle of up to €25,000 in value. This is a one-time subsidy.

NEW GRANTS ON PURCHASE OF WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

SKEMI ĠODDA FUQ XIRI TA' VETTURI AĊĊESSIBBLI ĠHAS-SIĠĠU TAR-ROTI



DRIVE FROM WHEELCHAIR GRANT

20% grant on cost of vehicle of up to €60,000 in value *

**excluding taxes and registration costs*



SUSSIDJU FUQ VETTURI DRIVE FROM WHEELCHAIR

Sussidju ta' 20% fuq il-valur ta' vettura li tiswa sa €60,000 *

**eskluzi taxxi u registrazzjoni*



inkluzjoni

Information as at launch date

2 APPLICANTS
BENEFITTED
FROM THIS
GRANT BETWEEN
JUNE AND
DECEMBER 2023
WITH A VALUE OF
€20,338

NEW GRANTS ON PURCHASE OF WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

SKEMI ĠODDA FUQ XIRI TA' VETTURI AĊĊESSIBBLI ĠHAS-SIĠĠU TAR-ROTI



GRANT ON MODIFIED, WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

(previously owned and registered in Malta)

10% grant on cost of second-hand vehicle of up to €25,000 in value



SUSSIDJU FUQ VETTURA MODIFIKATA U AĊĊESSIBBLI ĠHAS-SIĠĠU TAR-ROTI

(li kienet propjetà ta' xi ħadd residenti Malta u rreġistrata f'Malta)

Sussidju ta' 10% fuq il-valur ta' vettura second-hand li tiswa sa €25,000

Information as at launch date

2 APPLICANTS
BENEFITTED
FROM THIS GRANT
BETWEEN JUNE
AND DECEMBER
2023 WITH A
VALUE OF €2,420

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING SERVICE

Interpreting services are offered to facilitate communication in everyday life and therefore include a variety of sectors further aligning Malta with the UNCRPD. These sectors include (but are not limited to) education, employment, health, legal, social and leisure activities. This service is available to hearing-impaired individuals who use Maltese Sign Language.

Aġenzija Support offers the service of Sign Language Interpreting (SLI) between Maltese Sign Language (LSM – *Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija*¹) and spoken language (Maltese and English) and vice-versa, across Malta and Gozo.

Offering a personalised service to all their service users means that each Sign Language Interpreter takes time to understand the context, the situation and the individuals where interpretation is required to ensure the highest service user accessibility and satisfaction.

Number of service users	43
Number of hours of interpreting	2,796
Number of hours provided to students in schools and colleges	1,641
Number of appointments attended by interpreters	1,310

Table 8: Service provision by Sign Language Interpreters in 2023

Educational interpreting in classes and lectures involves a lot of preparatory work. Students are supported in a number of ways including attending meetings, discussing with other professionals and parents, research and preparation of accessible materials.

Appointments attended by the Interpreters in 2023 included interpreting for adult service users during medical, court or



legal appointments, employment-related events, courses, NGOs and personal appointments (such as banking or job interviews).

Interpreting demand has grown beyond one-to-one in person interpreting and more requests have been made for sight-translation (text to LSM and vice-versa) as well as online call-ins. Interpreting services have also been provided to service users wishing to participate in opportunities which may otherwise not be accessible, including projects and local, international and online conferences.

During 2023, five other interpreters continued to provide service through an Expression of Interest (EOI) contract. In total they have provided 194 hours of interpreting to service users.

¹ LSM was declared an official language of Malta in 2016



HIGHLIGHTS

- The first Service User Day and online survey: this was aimed to gather direct feedback from the Deaf community and their family. Following detailed analysis of the service users' feedback, several discussions between the SLI team and management were held to plan the best way forward and investment for the SLI Service to further grow and develop both in quantity and quality. An action plan as a way forward was then drawn up. Deaf service users were re-invited for a follow-up session, so that the interpreters could present the findings of the survey, discussions held and the plan for the future.
- International Sign Training: All interpreters successfully completed online training for a credit in International Sign in collaboration with Humak University in Finland.
- Other training attended: "Introduction to Deafblind Communication & Interpreting" and "An Introduction to Working with DeafBlind People", which was held in Malta by a Deaf service user and trainer. This was followed by training in Brussels organised by the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI) and Empoway.
- For the first time, Maltese SLIs were represented at the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters Conference "Shaping Our World for A Better Future" held in Jeju Island, South Korea.
- Two SLIs interpreted for participants from the Deaf People's Association Malta and Friends of the Earth Malta attending the "Plants And Nature Conveying Augmented Knowledge for Everyone" (PANCAKE) Erasmus+ transnational meeting held in San Benedetto del Tronto, Italy.

EACH
INTERPRETER
RECEIVED 40
HOURS OF
PROFESSIONAL
SUPERVISION IN
2023

- Interpreters participated in online webinars organised by EFSLI, the Association of Sign Language Interpreters UK and EdSigns.
- A reading sessions of a book by author Beppe Caruana was interpreted in Maltese Sign Language during the Malta Book Festival.
- More adults have succeeded in moving into occupations that involve public speaking and meetings, made possible by the interpreting service.

WAY FORWARD

- Outreaches to other professionals and organisations for greater interdisciplinary work and early introduction to the service.
- Continue being allies with CRPD, Deaf People Association Malta and Kunsill tal-Lingwa tas-Sinjali Maltija by offering interpreting service beyond individual service user demand and hence facilitating discussions, awareness raising and lobbying for Deaf persons' rights.
- Staff mobility via Erasmus+ to gain insights on best practices in interpreting services and way ahead for expanding to reach service users' needs (in line with the action plan from the service users feedback).
- Another Service User Day to keep an open line of communication and feedback about the service.

TESTIMONIALS

"The year 2023 was a really busy year full of various interesting appointments where I got complete access to communication with the help of the Interpreting Service. [There were] personal appointments and numerous job interviews ... [as well as] other appointments and / or training both in my career and personal life. Whilst thanking you again, I am looking forward to an interesting year filled with various subjects and interesting appointments to follow."

Service user, Sign Language Interpreting Service

"The sign language interpreting service is stellar. The service is prompt and professional. I find the online interpreting, sight translation and relay services very helpful."

Service user, Sign Language Interpreting Service

"I am very happy with the support given to my daughter. Without this service my daughter wouldn't be able to continue her educational journey at MCAST. The support she receives from the SLI is incredible and impeccable."

Parent, Sign Language Interpreting Service

"I can say that the Sign Language Interpreting Service is the best. The SLIs give sessions to my children at school. They are very happy with her and she works really hard with them. They built a very good relationship. Whenever I need some help, I contact her and she is always ready to assist. The interpreters give a huge support. They are all the best."

Parent of service users, Sign Language Interpreting Service

SONIA TANTI INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTRE

The Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre (STILC) provides information, guidance and assessment by professionals to persons with disabilities and their families to lead an independent life within the community through the use of mobility equipment, assistive devices and / or training. The services offered include wheelchair and seating assessments, driving assessments and guidance on car adaptations. Persons with disabilities are also able to receive driving lessons using a modified car, through the Adaptive Driving Motoring School.

During the year 2023, STILC services were relocated from Hal Far to temporary premises in Qrendi. The premises in Hal Far are being extended and upgraded for the benefit of the service users.

Several discussions were held with Ottobock Plc regarding the continuation of the specialised seating assessments and services in Malta in collaboration with STILC services. Towards the end of 2023, a two-day Ottobock Malta Clinic resumed. An initial agreement was reached for two clinics pending further negotiations for a continued service and subject to demand.

The STILC services strengthened their continued effort for the further development of service delivery to the service users through more training opportunities for professionals who provide services within STILC. The Case Management System of the Agency was adopted as the main database system of the service so that data can be streamlined and more efficient.

In January 2023, the STILC adaptive driving team, consisting of Occupational Therapists and a driving instructor, received specialised training in Malta from an Italian trainer. The training focused on adaptive driving on a drive-from-wheelchair vehicle. This allowed the driving team to enhance their skills in relation to the assessment process of persons with disabilities and the use of car adaptations. This allowed the Occupational Therapists assessing the service users referred to the driving clinic to acquire more specialised knowledge to be able to offer

728
APPOINTMENTS
WERE CARRIED
OUT BY STILC TEAM
IN 2023

a more informed service and hence be able to make the most accurate recommendations that reflect the service users' needs.

During the year under review, STILC services were re-evaluated so that areas for improvement were identified, which changes were then reflected in an updated Manual of Procedures, offering standardised guidelines for an enhanced and more efficient service provision.

Collaborative work was continued with local suppliers in order to strengthen the Agency's position as a national service provider by continually improving the product knowledge of the team to reflect the latest and most advanced technologies available in the market.



This allows the team to prescribe those products which best meet the service users' complex needs and in line with the latest technologies available in the market. This is an important aspect for the clinical work as holistic and informed recommendations can be offered to the service users, allowing them to maintain and improve their independent living.

**250 SERVICE
USERS**
BENEFITTED
FROM STILC
SERVICES IN 2023

WAY FORWARD

- To continue collaboration with the Projects team on the development of the Hal Far premises.
- To continue investing in training for the STILC team in order to ensure that all are kept updated with the latest knowledge, information and assistive technology products.
- To continue working on streamlining the databases and reduce any inefficient practices and procedures.

ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION & TECHNOLOGY UNIT

The Access to Communication & Technology Unit (ACTU) offers both an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) service and Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT) service. The aim of the services is to provide clinical assessment, recommendations, support initial implementation, as well as technical and training support for communication aids. ACTU also provides similar support for the EAT service. These services are offered to individuals with complex communication needs, physical and / or sensory difficulties, speech, language and communication needs and / or learning disabilities and their families.

Another service provided by ACTU is the Information Day service, which aims to provide consultation sessions to therapists and their service users who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the full ACTU service but require advice on AAC or EAT needs. Furthermore, professionals who want to view equipment / software or discuss EAT or AAC, can benefit from such information days. The service has six pathways, which include:

- Profound and Multiple Disabilities
- Adults with Learning Disability
- Adults with Neurological Conditions
- Gozo
- Professional Requests in Malta
- Professional Requests in Gozo

ACTU offers face-to-face appointments as well as telehealth appointments to the service users. Site visits, which include home, school, work and / or day centre visits, are also offered if the therapists deem this as necessary.

Apart from the services described above, ACTU has a research remit. This is necessary to advance the field of assistive technology both on a local and international level. The members of ACTU are therefore actively involved in various research projects.

1. SERVICE DELIVERY

ACTU service utilises a transdisciplinary approach to service delivery together with models of practice pertaining to the field of AAC, Assistive Technology, Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy. The assessment process utilised is in line with international practices as also highlighted by the World Health Organisation. Another important aspect of service delivery is educating the families and professionals to upskill others with a view to increasing capacity across the country and across different populations. In 2023, the ACTU team initiated a system of sending SMS reminders for service users prior to appointments.

ACTU HAD
CONTACT WITH
**258 SERVICE
USERS** DURING
2023

139 PARTICIPANTS
ATTENDED
THE YEARLY
INTERNATIONAL
ONLINE
CONFERENCE
ORGANISED BY
ACTU



Appointments carried out	505
Appointments that were cancelled / not attended by service users	149
Service users who were discharged from ACTU services	71
Closed Information Day requests	16
Number of referrals and requests for ACTU services	124

Table 9: Data for ACTU services in 2023

During the year under review, the Agency also issued an EOI for Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists to provide part-time services to ACTU on a self-employed basis in order to support the ACTU team.

2. HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

i. *New premises*

In April, ACTU services were moved from Hal Far to temporary premises in Qrendi due to renovation works required for the existing premises.

ii. *Educating the public and professionals*

In Q4 of 2023, ACTU organised the fourth online annual conference entitled “Digital Assistive



Technology: The Current Situation and Way forward". This conference, attended by professionals, academics, students and members of the public both local and international, aimed to increase awareness on assistive technology, highlight available services and challenges and push Assistive Technology on the policymakers' agenda. The keynote was addressed by an international speaker with the participation of other local stakeholders.

ACTU also provided bespoke training to educators from various church schools in Gozo to help educators to implement AAC. Furthermore, training was organised for Sannat Unit educators to support their goal setting in the area of AAC. Training was also given to Allied Health Professionals (Speech & Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists) and parents both in Malta and Gozo on the implementation of AAC specifically using Liberator software packages.

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PROFESSIONALS
AND CAREGIVERS
ATTENDED
TRAINING
ORGANISED BY
ACTU IN 2023

iii. Collaboration with other organisations

- Participation in the Person Centred Technology Member Forum of the EASPD, of which Aġenzija Support is an active member.
- The team also worked in close collaboration with the Italian organisation AIAS Bologna, through a MOU through which ACTU professionals could engage in a job shadowing experience. A delegation from AIAS Bologna was also hosted by the ACTU team during 2023.
- Further collaboration with the Malta Trust Foundation (MTF), which provides funds for AAC / EAT solutions.
- Strengthened the team's professional relationship with the Speech and Language Department within UOM, specifically the Voice Division on the production of a voice banking handbook and the AAC Division within the Speech Language Department within the Department for Health Services for capacity building of therapists.
- Coordinated two visits from Liberator Ltd and two visits from Smartbox, different suppliers who were in Malta to demonstrate their new range of devices, provide training, participate in assessments and follow up on existing service users in Malta.



- Further collaboration with the Association of Speech and Language Pathologists on the development of a new AAC app in Maltese.
- Collaboration with the UOM to upgrade an existing app in Maltese. The ACTU team and UOM are also collaborating to ensure that all undergraduate Speech & Language Therapy students have exposure to an AAC-specific environment.

iv. Training and development

- Regular training from suppliers to ensure that they have up-to-date product knowledge to support their clinical decision-making.
- Training from the FITA, TherapyBox UK and Voiceltt!UK.
- Recertification of one therapist in NAPPI Training.
- Carried out research about the role of the Speech & Language Therapist in the field of AAC. This was presented at the first national conference by the Association of Speech and Language Pathologists.
- Participation in EASPD conferences as part of the Person-Centred Technology Forum and AccessibiliTech Erasmus+ project.
- Coordinated the yearly online international conference on digital accessibility.
- Presented a paper on “Perceptions of AAC use amongst Maltese individuals with complex

communication needs” during the biannual International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) conference in Mexico.

- Presented two educational sessions at the Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe (AAATE) conference in Paris entitled “Communication Aids: Beyond face to face communication! and when mainstream technology doesn’t meet the user’s needs!”

3. CURRENT PROJECTS

The ACTU team is involved in an Erasmus+ project entitled “The Emergence of the International Federation for Information Processing Europe”. The aim of this project is to develop a network of inclusion practitioners and an online one-stop-shop for education practitioners on good practices of inclusion. The ACTU team is responsible for the production of a work package in relation to content creation and another on networking.

WAY FORWARD

- ACTU team will continue to work on the Erasmus+ project and other University projects which are due to start in 2024. These include Smart Home and Cactus with the Department of Engineering and ICT.
- The team will also be organising training for professionals and educators to increase capacity outside the ACTU team.
- ACTU will continue to attend Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to ensure up-to-date knowledge of new equipment and assessment and interventions in the field of AAC and EAT. This will include shadowing opportunities abroad utilising Erasmus+ mobility funds.
- Coordinate scheduled visits by Smartbox Ltd, Liberator Ltd and SR Labs to ensure that all therapists have up-to-date product knowledge and to support local AAC users.

PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY PREVENTION TEAM



Agenzija Support aims to enhance community living and move away from institutionalisation and engage in deinstitutionalisation practices. The Agency recognises that being proactive and practicing prevention interventions can promote the services to another level of efficacy and efficiency in addressing service users' needs.

For this reason, a special intervention and prevention team was deemed necessary to focus on issues pertaining to behaviours of concern, sexuality, profiling of service users to ensure good service quality, person-centred ISPs, PBS and other base techniques, in order to ensure best practice service delivery.

The duly formed Professional Advisory Prevention Team (PAPT) started off with a focus on NAPPI training and sexuality training within the Agency's services. The objective is to have these techniques and psychological tools disseminated and implemented into each service. The team's remit is to have its expert personnel train other Agency staff as well as provide on-the-job mentoring and coaching.

The ultimate objectives of the PAPT include:

- Working closely with the other services and supporting them according to identified needs.
- Working towards bringing about a culture change into two major focuses – behaviour of concern and sexuality, maintaining a human rights approach throughout and in conformity with the UNCRPD.
- Regarding behaviour of concern, the focus will be on prevention and psychological intervention rather than consequences and restrictions, aiming to become proactive, rather than reactive, when dealing with behaviour of concern.
- With regards to sexuality issues, the team aims to normalise the discussion, provide proficient support and make sexuality a recognised activity of living and giving it its due importance in the individuals' lives.
- The team will also be assisting the Agency's services in reviewing incident reports, providing debriefing and post-incident reviews when these are deemed necessary.

Furthermore, the NAPPI team will also be involved with the Human Resources (HR) Department in the validation of injuries-on-duty caused by behaviours of concern and assist in revising the applicable policies.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Finalisation of Sexuality Policy**
- **Continuous work on actualising EMP 681 – Setting up of an educational programme about sexuality for persons with intellectual disability**
- **Initial works on the EU funded project “Let's Talk About It!”**
- **Revised ISP procedures**
- **Acquisition of resources for sexuality training**
- **Delivered one-to-one sessions with service users regarding sexuality**
- **Delivered two training sessions to the Police Department regarding Autism and working with persons with intellectual disability, with the participation of persons with disabilities thus promoting coproduction.**

NAPPI
TRAINING WAS
DELIVERED TO
255 EMPLOYEES
THROUGH
22 TRAINING
SESSIONS IN 2023

HUMAN RESOURCES:

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT &
EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING
DEPARTMENT

The HR Department’s main purpose is to implement Aġenzija Sapport’s strategy and objectives by effectively managing its talent through best practice, HR policies and creating a psychologically safe working environment. This focus provides the impetus to develop clear strategies on people management and employee well-being in order to develop a dynamic workforce to meet the Agency’s needs.

The HR Department manages the employee life cycle from recruitment until the employee retires or resigns. During this period, the HR team manages various functions related to onboarding, career development, performance, engagement, well-being, compensation and benefits.

1. STAFF COMPLEMENT

Male employees	146
Female employees	484
Total number of employees	630

Table 10: Aġenzija Sapport staff complement as at 31 December 2023

2. RECRUITMENT

As a public sector entity, the Agency follows the provisions of Directive 7.3: “Delegation of Authority to Effect Recruitment, Promotions and Industrial Relations in the Public Sector entities” to recruitment processes.

38 INTERNAL
CALLS AND
34 EXTERNAL
CALLS WERE
ISSUED BETWEEN
JANUARY AND
DECEMBER 2023

DISABILITY STUDIES



SARAH BUHAGIAR
COURSE: MASTER OF ARTS IN DISABILITY STUDIES
ROLE: MANAGER, SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING & NGO DEPARTMENT

“ My role focuses on empowering persons with disability through co-production and supported decision-making. My studies have enhanced my understanding of their challenges, inspiring me to develop strategies and teams committed to fostering community inclusion and independent living.”

www.sapport.gov.mt  **AĠENZIJASAPPORT**

Moreover, guidelines and best practices issued by the People and Standards Division are adopted to ensure fair and transparent processes based on the principle of meritocracy.

The Agency recruited 75 new employees during the year under review. This also included trainees engaged through the Institute of Public Service.

In line with the Protection of Minors' Act (POMA), Aġenzija Sapport makes sure that all employees recruited within the Agency get a POMA clearance. Such checks are logged with the Courts of Malta through the Agency's lawyer.

3. ONBOARDING

The HR department also engages in an onboarding process for new recruits. Each new recruit is dedicated with individual time to sign the contract, go through the job description, fill in engagement forms and also attends an introduction meeting with HR personnel. During this meeting, an explanation is given of basic procedures, Shireburn Indigo, insurances and other relevant information. The onboarding process also serves as a space whereby new recruits can ask any queries.

In addition to these practices, HR introduced a new system where HR employees serve as a focal point for new employees. To strengthen the link between the onboarding system and the first few weeks of employment, HR members keep communication with new employees so that direction can be given where required. This system is still in its testing stages, although employees who were contacted expressed that they were pleased that HR was following up with them following the start of their employment with the Agency.

4. EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING AND OUTREACH

Through 2023, the HR team held a number of visits within different services and sections, in collaboration with the office of the CEO. Such meetings help to maintain contact with all employees.

In addition, the Department facilitates psychological assistance to employees going through personal and work-related issues. These schemes include the Employee Assistance Programme and the Employee Support Programme. The team also takes an active role in referring and encouraging the use of these programmes to employees facing difficulties in their personal lives.

Regular contact is kept with those employees who are on long sick leave, suffer an injury on duty or who are identified as facing challenges.

5. INJURY ON DUTY SYSTEM

During the year under review, HR continued to monitor the situation of Injury on Duty with the participation of the PAPT. In cases where serious incidents occurred, employees were provided with the necessary support from both HR and PAPT Managers. Meetings were held on occasions where the incident was serious, repeated and / or where HR / PAPT felt that a different course of action could have prevented the incident. The PAPT Manager participated in meetings with staff where the injury was caused due to behaviour of concern and gave her input to avoid similar incidents in the future. Employees participating in such meetings appreciated the support and most employees also looked forward to discuss the way forward, especially in cases where behaviour of concern was present.

6. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

In line with the collective agreement, the Agency strives to provide a work-life balance to its employees through family-friendly measures.

REQUESTS	NUMBER OF APPROVED REQUESTS
Flexible hours	70
Reduced hours	30
Telework hours	31
Parental leave / career break	15

Table 11: Requests received and approved by HR Department in 2023

7. OTHER HR INITIATIVES

i. Career exposure

Personnel from the HR Department, in liaison with the Marketing Department, also participated in a number of initiatives in order to promote various career opportunities within the Agency. These ranged from talks and meetings with students to participation in career expos.

ii. Expressions of interest

The HR Department also issued 13 EOIs throughout 2023. These were related to training, including:

- Four EOIs were issued related to training and travelling duties abroad, accompanying service users.
- One EOI called for Health and Safety Representatives.
- One EOI was related to an initiative as part of the 20th anniversary event of Aġenzija Sapport.
- One EOI was related to on-call duties in all day services after working hours.



iii. Student placements

Throughout the past year, the HR Department took over the management of student placements within the Agency. Such placements help students to enhance their skills and knowledge within their area of studies.

In addition, during the summer period, the Agency hosted 22 students under the Summer Work Opportunities Scheme 2023.

85 STUDENTS
WERE HOSTED
WITHIN THE
AGENCY IN 2023



8. NEW INITIATIVES 2023

- i. Digitalisation of payroll processes: Contactless clocking-in devices have been installed in all offices, day centres and supported independent living premises. An administrator for each device was allocated and is tasked with the enrolment of his / her team, with the backing of the payroll team.
- ii. The HR team also collaborated with the Way to Work team and applied the Agency's value of coproduction, where the HR team was able to participate in mock interviews with Way to Way Programme service users and provide them with support and feedback in relation to the interviewing process. HR and Way to Work Programme employees collaborated together to create mock interviews in which Way to Work Programme participants could sit for an interview for the job in which

they are most interested in. Feedback was given to the participants, who took the matter very seriously and prepared wholeheartedly for this meeting.

- iii. As from 2023, service users have also been given the opportunity to participate in recruitment selection boards and give their opinions on Support Workers and Senior Support Workers who would be providing their service to the Agency and its service users.
- iv. Job descriptions are also being reviewed to reflect a more realistic description of tasks. This is done through discussions with all stakeholders involved in any duties and responsibilities including the service users. Furthermore, the feedback from the service users was instrumental in helping draft job descriptions in line with the needs of the service user.

9. TRAINING AND EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the period under review, the HR Department continued to invest in the Agency's employees, by organising training and courses in line with the training needs identified with each department and unit.

The HR team also processed 42 applications for training funds from staff, for a cost of €9,742. Another 31 applications were processed for CPD for the sum of €11,846. In total, 39 employees benefitted from study leave during the period under review.

i. *Training plan for 2024*

The training plan for 2024 includes 6 categories:

- Knowledge about Agenzija Sapport
- Mandatory training
- Oliver McGowan training
- Upgrading to UNCRPD standards
- Leadership training
- Specific training

The aim is to ensure that training will be distributed in an equitable manner and in relation to the Agency's strategy and the UNCRPD convention.

ii. *Training strategy framework and the consultation processes*

Discussions were held with the Directors / Managers of each respective Directorate, in collaboration with the office of the CEO, so that a more aligned strategy is applied according to the new Mission, Cause and Strategy of the Agency. Feedback was analysed and a report was compiled focusing on the training priorities of the Agency.

iii. *Travel policy*

The Travel Policy, as an addendum to the Manual of Transport and Travel which agencies have to abide by, was discussed with the various related internal stakeholders. The addendum relates to the specific needs of the Agency, such as compensation in relation to travel with service users, which is not catered for in the Manual of Transport and Travel.

WAY FORWARD

A new system for Performance Appraisals will be discussed and implemented. This system is based on a more qualitative appraisal of each employee through a semi-structured discussion. Such an approach would result in a two-way relationship between each employee and his / her superior so that performance would also be aligned to the strategy of the Agency.

This is part of a holistic approach where each employee is supported throughout his / her journey with the Agency from on-boarding until the end of employment.

This system is also complemented by a Performance Improvement Plan to ensure that all employees are aligned to the strategy of the Agency.

**143 TRAINING
INITIATIVES WERE
COORDINATED IN
2023**

Ir-Riforma
tal-Assistenza Personali
għall-Persuni b'Disabilità
2023

QUALITY AUDIT, RESEARCH & INNOVATION DEPARTMENT

Established in January 2023, the Quality Audit, Research and Innovation (QARI) Department is integral to the Agency's commitment to excellence, compliance and forward-thinking initiatives. The Department's goal is to serve as the backbone, ensuring that every aspect of Agenzija Sappot's operations adheres to the highest standards, remains informed by robust research and continually evolves to meet the needs of service users and stakeholders.

1. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SERVICE AUDITING

Quality assurance and service auditing are central to maintaining the organisation's commitment to excellence. Through auditing processes, feedback mechanisms and engagement with service users, relatives and NGOs, the QARI Department continuously evaluated service quality and identified areas for improvement. Throughout the period under review, it recommended measures to enhance overall effectiveness and satisfaction and developed action plans to further improve the Department's assessment and monitoring methodologies.

2. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk Management is a priority to safeguard the well-being of service users and stakeholders and the Agency's reputation. Thus, the Department has taken proactive measures to identify, assess and mitigate risks throughout. Coordinating with legal experts, both internally and externally, the Department ensured that Agenzija Sappot operated in line with legislation while minimising exposure to potential liabilities.

3. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

At the heart of the Department's mandate lies Research and Development, where meticulous attention focuses on understanding emerging trends, gathering insights through internal and external research endeavours and fostering collaborations with third-party entities to expand knowledge and drive innovation. Whether facilitating research partnerships or conducting in-house studies, the QARI Department provided evidence-based solutions that enhance service delivery and outcomes. It also oversaw projects related to areas that are critical to the future of

disability services, such as the Personal Assistance (PA) reform, research regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) and independent living and sexuality. The Department also acted as a gatekeeper for students, academics and organisations wishing to conduct their research with the Agency.

4. POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

Collaborating closely with stakeholders, regulatory bodies and internal teams, the Department ensured that organisational policies were compliant with regulations and reflective of best practices in the field. The Department paid attention to detail and commitment to staying abreast of sector standards, ensuring that Agenzija Sappot's policies remain effective and responsive to the evolving needs of service users and stakeholders.

In preparation for implementation in 2024, a robust Whistleblower Policy and Framework was also developed by the QARI Department, reflecting the Agency's commitment to transparency and accountability. Throughout the reporting period, significant progress was made in drafting and refining the policy and relevant framework.

Developing an effective quality of service and feedback mechanism was also a priority for the QARI Department to ensure that service users and other stakeholders have accessible channels for voicing any concerns and grievances. While the Department made progress in reviewing existing policies and structuring reporting mechanisms, further implementation steps are underway to realise this initiative fully.



5. OTHER PROJECTS

As the liaison between Aġenzija Sapport, its licensed services, licensed NGOs and the Social Care Standards Authority (SCSA), the QARI Department was central in ensuring regulatory compliance and facilitating stakeholder communication and collaboration. The role of the Department included overseeing certification and licensing processes, particularly for the Agency's Day Services and Supported Independent Living Services and concurrently maintaining accurate documentation for reference and audits. QARI also collaborated closely with these services to develop, implement and monitor action plans for improvement, ensuring that communication channels were efficient and timely information dissemination was achieved.

Additionally, QARI addressed compliance concerns promptly and generated regular reports to track progress and provide successful licensing outcomes.

The management of the Agency's support@gov.mt mailbox underscored the Department's dedication to responsive and efficient communication and improving customer satisfaction. By overseeing the transition of the customer support mailbox, QARI ensured that inquiries, feedback and concerns were promptly addressed, contributing to a positive experience for all stakeholders.

The QARI Department also set up the facility for all documents developed by the Agency to be translated to ensure complete transparency and understanding in both English and Maltese.

Lastly, the Department played a pivotal role in driving strategic innovation by developing and evaluating projects, recommendations and proposals. By liaising with key stakeholders and monitoring third-party reports, the Department identified opportunities for improvement and innovation, ensuring that Aġenzija Sapport remains at the forefront of service delivery and organisational excellence.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- Played a pivotal role in the PA reform initiative through comprehensive policy drafting, stakeholder engagement and public consultation efforts. The PA reform initiative promotes inclusivity, autonomy and dignity for all persons with disabilities.
- Commissioned market research to determine the availability and adequacy of and accessibility to, AI-powered technologies in local Maltese markets for persons with disabilities in Malta.

Thursday 15 June 2023, at 1.15 to 2.30 pm (NY time) | UN Headquarters in New York, at Conference Room C | Accessible event + free food

Implementing the Guidelines on Deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies:

Challenges, opportunities, and a way forward



Global Coalition on Deinstitutionalization



PERMANENT MISSION OF MALTA TO THE UN NEW YORK





- Laid the foundations for Aġenzija Sapport to introduce support for persons with disabilities and their support networks through education and guidance on sexuality and sexual health. QARI developed accessible policies with all stakeholders, including service users, to ensure their needs and preferences were considered at every step through focus groups.
- Collaborated with other Departments on the launch of the “Let’s Talk about IT!” EU-funded project to work with international partners on the development of training and educational programmes for persons with disabilities and employees on sexuality and sexual health.
- Revised several legislations on behalf of MIV, including the Personal Autonomy and Protection of Adults in Vulnerable Positions.
- Represented Aġenzija Sapport at the 16th session of the Conference of State Parties to the CRPD (COSP16) in New York with a presentation on Malta’s actions related to the way forward for independent living, including deinstitutionalisation and the PA reform. This was well-received, providing valuable feedback for ongoing initiatives.
- Drafted several policies and person-centred tools to aid the different services to be aligned with the UNCPRD.
- Spearheaded the Deinstitutionalisation Resources Board to drive forward the deinstitutionalisation agenda, leveraging collaborative partnerships and fostering inclusive approaches to support individuals’ transition to community-based living arrangements.

16 RESEARCH APPLICATIONS WERE PROCESSED BY QARI DEPARTMENT IN 2023

QARI DEPARTMENT COORDINATED AND SUPPORTED LICENSE RENEWALS BY SCSA FOR **28 SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING UNITS AND DAY CENTRES**

- Commenced the development of an integrated and robust quality assurance, service audit and risk framework based on ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 31000:2018 standards and guidelines.
- Commenced drafting a service monitoring tool to facilitate effective quality monitoring and control.
- Launched two consultative committees with service users and relatives, providing a monthly platform to voice their perspectives, concerns and suggestions.
- Launched the NGO Stakeholders Forum, providing a bi-monthly platform for Aġenzija Sapport and NGOs to discuss ways to collaborate in achieving objectives within the National Strategy for Persons with Disability – 'Freedom to Live' (2021-2030).
- Launched the first Quality Management System questionnaire among the Agency's management teams to inform future enhancements and ensure service delivery remains responsive to the needs and expectations of service users.
- Participated in roundtable discussion on the Digital Service Act to discuss opportunities and challenges for social welfare in Malta.

WAY FORWARD

In 2024, the QARI Department will see a revamped remit to improve functionality and efficiency across its operations. The key focus areas include:

- Acting as a gatekeeper for processing research requests from students and third parties interested in conducting research with or for the Agency.
- Collaborating with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the UOM as part of the MOU in conducting essential and impactful research.
- Establishing and overseeing the Research & Development arm of the Agency to facilitate innovation, foster collaboration and ensure continuous improvement in service delivery.
- Facilitating Consultative Groups involving service users, their relatives and NGOs in the disability sector to engage stakeholders in ongoing discussions and consultations on various Agency initiatives.
- Conducting risk assessments across all directorates, address concerns and liaise with management to discuss resolution options and prevention strategies.
- Conducting audits and evaluations of departments, handling requests for information related to standards and best practices and liaising with management to address compliance issues and provide recommendations.
- Developing a Whistleblower Reporting Framework to address wrongdoing and ensure confidentiality.
- Responding to reports, surveys and information requests on behalf of Aġenzija Sapport, collecting data for research purposes and consolidating and standardising data for future planning.



CHANGE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

The concept of change management within Agenzija Sapport was introduced towards the end of 2022, thus a Change Management Department was created. This Department is tasked with driving and managing change in a strategic and structural manner, all within the context of the Agency's mission and cause.

During the year under review, the Department coordinated several changes in collaboration with the respective directorates, mainly categorised within three main pillars:

1. RE-ORGANISATION OF THE AGENCY'S ORGANIGRAM

This was undertaken to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and seamless collaboration across departments. In consultation with the Senior Management Team, it was decided to re-organise the Agency's directorates. This change was implemented to make Agenzija Sapport more dynamic and prepared for future changes.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW MISSION STATEMENT AND CAUSE

This is fundamental to the Agency and other disability-related organisations, particularly to be in compliance with the UNCRPD. Recognising the need for a change in both mission and cause, the Change Management Department initiated a comprehensive consultation process, engaging every level of the Agency. To ensure clarity and inclusivity for all stakeholders, it was agreed to incorporate easy-to-read versions of both the mission and cause.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF AGENCY'S STRATEGY FRAMEWORK AND OPERATIONAL PLANS

The firm belief in the principles encapsulated in the UNCRPD led to the realignment of the Agency's strategy and operational plans. In collaboration with the Agency's Directors, the team embarked on a re-thinking process, resulting in a strategic framework that accommodates the principles enshrined in the UNCRPD document and the National Disability Strategy. This re-evaluation process helped the Agency to identify and address gaps through various operational changes.

THE AGENCY'S PRIMARY COMMITMENT IS TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND ENSURE THE FULL AND EQUAL ENJOYMENT OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL WITH DISABILITIES.

Following discussions with various stakeholders, the Agency now has a strategic framework encompassing an overarching objective subdivided into five sub-objectives, four phases, directorate and departmental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and four corporate KPIs.

This strategic change necessitated a change in the operational plan. In collaboration with the respective teams, a migration plan to the new system was carried out in the context of the above changes and aimed to create a more cooperative environment.

WAY FORWARD

Change can be daunting, often shaking one's comfort zones. However, when managed and executed properly, change can lead to growth and exploration of uncharted areas. The key to sustainable change is dialogue and constant communication. While further changes within Agenzija Sapport are anticipated, they will be proposed and coordinated through a participatory approach.

OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

The Operations Management team, a strategic addition to the Agency's structure, is a comprehensive unit that amalgamates Operational Management, ICT, Infrastructural Projects and Health & Safety. This Department's main objective is to centralise the Agency's operational functions through these diverse inter-functionalities, thereby achieving higher efficiency and efficacy.

During the year under review, this Department embarked on several initiatives, with a concentrated focus on three main objectives:

1. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS

Aġenzija Support operates several properties that have required constant maintenance and occasional restructuring over the years. It remains a primary objective of the Operations Department to achieve the highest level of efficacy in implementing such projects, ensuring that all properties are well-maintained and fit for purpose.

2. ESTABLISHMENT OF ROBUST ICT STRUCTURES

Recognising the critical role of ICT, this Department has made it a priority to establish a robust ICT foundation, with which the Agency is better positioned to deliver quality service provision, enhancing its operational efficiency and effectiveness.

3. MAINSTREAMING OF OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

The Agency offers many services through different directorates, leading to a variety of procedures. This diversity, while reflecting the breadth of the services, can sometimes lead to a lack of effectiveness and coherence. To address this, it was deemed imperative to centralise operational processes as much as possible. This initiative guarantees effectiveness, minimises duplications and results in better resource distribution, thereby enhancing operational efficiency.

MAJOR ICT PROJECTS

- Transferring the servizz.gov line directly to Support
- Infrastructure upgrades in Mtarfa and Hal Far Day Centres
- CCTV installations in all Day Centres
- Online booking system for meeting rooms
- Upgrading the Agency's telephony system to handle the number of staff, its network connectivity and migrate from desk phones to softphones
- Implement e-signatures across the Agency
- Outsource and build a system for ICL Finance
- Centralise schemes including the Blue Badge and the EU Disability Card into one database
- Coordinate the development of a National Disability Register
- Upgrading old laptops for staff across the Agency to be Windows 11 compliant.

WAY FORWARD

The primary goal of the Operations Department is to achieve efficiency and deliver quality processes. The team believes in the principles outlined by the UNCRPD and is thus committed to serve the Agency and its services to achieve coproduction, while fostering an environment that encourages deinstitutionalisation. In addition to providing centralisation, it will also strive to promote the objectives set in the Agency's strategic framework. This commitment underscores the team's dedication towards efficiency, quality and the strategic vision of the Agency.

PROJECTS, ADMINISTRATION & EU FUNDS DEPARTMENT

PROJECTS

The Projects Department underwent a restructuring process and on 1st January 2023 formed part of the Projects, Administration & EU Funds team. Despite the changes, the core principles remained to provide top quality project management services that will enhance the quality of life of services users and the Agency's workforce.

MAJOR PROJECTS

1. KIRKOP PREMISES

This project is aimed at developing a residential set-up with the ultimate aim to offer a transitional setting for service users to move towards independent living or supported living within the community. The project can host up to nine service users, multiple leisure spaces and garage. Civil works commenced in early 2023 with site clearance and minor excavations to construct water reservoir. Until end of 2023, 60% of civil works were completed. Mechanical and Electrical Services (M&E's) and finishing works Tenders were awarded in 2023 and works are expected to kick off in early 2024.



2. DINGLI PREMISES

During 2023, the civil works Tender was awarded. Project architects also concluded necessary documentation and neighbours' conditional reports. In the meantime, the plans were updated to accommodate for respite services.

3. STILC

Civil works commenced in 2023 to cater for an additional floor at the current STILC premises in Hal Far to create space for more offices and additional clinics for STILC and ACTU teams. The project involved the relocation of the existing services from Hal Far to the Qrendi Pastoral Centre, which also required upgrading facilities to accommodate the services. Demolition and construction works at the Hal Far site commenced in Q2 of 2023 and were being finalised and certified by end of 2023.



4. GHAJNSIELEM LEARNING HUB

In 2023, the team continued the embellishment works on the Ghajnsielem Learning Hub including the setting up of a motorised curtain and the trenching works for the reinstatement of electrical cables. Furthermore, new plans were designed for the extension wing and discussions with project architects were commenced to initiate its refurbishment together with the initiation of procurement procedures for this part of the premises for multi-service use. This final phase of the project is expected to be completed by Q1 of 2025.

5. VAJRITA

In 2022, Vajrita complex was successfully demolished. Next phase of this project was dependable on sufficient funding however none were allocated for 2023 and 2024. During the year in review, new designs of foundation plans and a modified concept in line with the Agency's vision were submitted by a newly-appointed architect. Application was still being evaluated by the Planning Authority at the end of 2023.

MINOR PROJECTS

1. MTARFA RESOURCE CENTRE

Following the successful completion of embellishment projects within the Centre throughout the previous years, the Projects team coordinated the replacement of common area tiles with slip resistant tiling. Moreover, during the period under review, civil works at the Centre were completed to cater for a newly installed passenger lift which will serve exclusively the service users attending this day centre.



2. DAR IL-FJURI, GOZO

Various works were addressed at the Gozo premises including the upgrading of electrical distribution and balancing, bathroom refurbishment, new tiling works at front and back balconies, new water gullies to address water ingress and new front patio foundations. These preparations will see the new installation of electrical meters in 2024.

3. ĠIRASOL, TAL-VIRTÙ COMMUNITY HUB

The final phase of this project saw the completion of refurbishment necessary to welcome Community Services service users at this new location. Works completed in 2023 included the finishing works at the outdoor area and the completion of the civil alterations on the façade of the premises to incorporate a platform lift which was installed in December 2023, pending certification.

4. MTARFA DAY CENTRE

The team coordinated works at Mtarfa Day Centre including the installation of a new boundary wall to enhance safety around the parameter of the site, works on landscaping and outdoor area for the benefit of service users attending this day centre. Meanwhile, makeover works at the basement units included newly installed M&E's, new heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, new bathroom, new gym area, new apertures and networking. This project is expected to accommodate service users back in Q1 of 2024.

5. SWATAR DAY CENTRE

The last phase of complete refurbishment within the Swatar Day Centre consisted of the installation of new emergency exit path and retiling of the entire day centre. This project necessitated that service users be relocated into a temporary day centre until civil and finishing works were completed.

6. MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP AND HAL FAR STORES

Part of the Hal Far Day Centre footprint included unused space which was turned into a workshop. This project was embarked on during the year under review to be used both for storage and for programmes with service users. The surrounding area was also refurbished to enhance accessibility. Works also included the setting of bathroom facilities and a gardener's storage room equipped with fire detection system.

OTHER PROJECTS

- Installation of new electrical and water supply meters across various premises to enhance utility provision.
- Bormla premises reconfigured to provide an individualised setup for a service user, with finishing works completed.
- Ongoing structural alterations and total refurbishment at Fgura supported independent living unit.
- Design and planning of a new setup for Mtarfa supported independent living unit.

ADMINISTRATION & MAINTENANCE

Forming part of the Projects, Administration & EU Funds Department, the Administration & Maintenance team supports the other departments across the Agency.

MAINTENANCE INTERVENTIONS

One of the key objectives in 2023 was to identify and reduce potential issues and hazards which, if not addressed, would potentially result in possible major emergencies.

In Q1 of 2023, the maintenance team visited all premises which make part of the Agency's remit and with the help of the Services teams as well as the Health & Safety Department, gathered significant feedback which helped the team identify these potential issues. These included:

- Minor rainwater leaks
- Power and lighting issues
- Portable appliance testing to identify older or malfunctioning appliances for possible replacement
- Visual inspection of indoor and outdoor air conditioning units for possible replacement
- Visual inspections of drains to seek any possible leaks and blockages

This proactive approach helped the team to better maintain and control the buildings as well its mechanical and electrical services appliances and furniture.

Another essential objective was to maintain all properties' external and internal integrity and aesthetic value and improve the work environment for both staff and service users.

Maintenance interventions included:

- 207 electrical and plumbing interventions
- 73 interventions on air conditioning units
- 1,584 general maintenance interventions

MINOR PROJECTS

- Refurbishment of Professional Development Centre boardroom and the creation of two new meeting rooms
- Reinstallation of the electrical system at Dar il-Fjuri, Gozo
- Installation of CCTV system in six Day Centres and four semi-independent living units
- Creation of a semi-independent living apartment at Hal Far Day Centre
- Furnishing of a new Valletta outlet KreAzzjoni, run by Day Services Department with the involvement of service users
- Installation of three new kitchenettes at Mtarfa Day Centre
- Re-furnishing part of Gwardjola Day Centre
- Replacement of 100 light fittings at Sliema Skills Space to LED fittings

1,864 – THE
NUMBER OF
SUCCESSFUL
MAINTENANCE
INTERVENTIONS
IN 2023

ISSUANCE OF REQUESTS FOR QUOTATIONS

During the period under review, the Administration & Maintenance Department issued around 750 request for quotations for the procurement of goods and services including appliances, furniture and fittings, supplies and consumables with limited quantities, electric and plumbing supplies, ad hoc services such as skip services, gardening and landscaping.

DUTY TRAVEL

During 2023, the Administration team coordinated 151 travel opportunities for Aġenzija Support employees and service users, in collaboration with various other departments.

FUNDING	COST
Flights procured from national funds	€33,793
National funds for accommodation / subsistence	€47,315
EU-funded flights	€22,293
EU-funded accommodation / subsistence	€56,680

Table 12: Funds used for duty travel, January – December 2023

DESTINATION	NUMBER OF STAFF	NUMBER OF SERVICE USERS
Belgium	9	
Spain	40	
Beirut	1	
Germany	4	
Estonia	28	
Sicily	3 (3 staff accompanying a group of service users)	
Albania	3	
USA	1	
Turkey	1	
Sweden	6 (3 staff accompanying a group of service users)	
South Korea	2	
Singapore	1	
Latvia	1	
Mexico	2	
Norway	7	
France	2	
UK	10	
Italy	8	1
Croatia	1	1
Netherlands	2	
Finland	4	
Slovenia	2	
Switzerland	13	
Total	151	2

Table 13: Number of duty travels coordinated by the Administration team, January – December 2023

EU PROJECTS

The aim of the EU Projects Department within Aġenzija Support is to tap into various EU funding programmes made available by the European Commission, for the benefit of service users and employees.

Through these opportunities, Aġenzija Support strives to develop projects that aim at fostering the below objectives, in line with Key Action 1 (KA1) and Key Action 2 (KA2) Priorities:

- Upskilling and providing opportunities to staff working within the Agency
- Enhancing client autonomy and independent living
- Delivering and ensuring a high-quality service of excellence
- Integrity, respect, equity, empathy and coproduction



In 2023 Aġenzija Support successfully finalised no less than 50 mobilities across six different European cities, including:

1. SPAIN (VALENCIA)

During this mobility, participating staff experienced innovative educational practices and cultural immersion in Valencia. The job shadowing sessions provided insights into advanced teaching methodologies and educational technologies used in Spanish schools.

2. ITALY (BOLOGNA)

A group of three members of staff were engaged in comprehensive training courses that focused on inclusion. The training sessions were complemented by cultural activities that deepened participants' understanding of Italian culture and educational traditions.

3. SPAIN (GIRONA)

This programme included intensive job shadowing experiences where participants observed and collaborated with local educators. This opportunity allowed for the exchange of best practices and the development of new educational skills. A total of 29 employees successfully completed the programme over six unique sessions throughout the year.

4. NORWAY

A group of six members of staff travelled to Norway for a unique training programme that emphasised education. The training included workshops on environmental education and field visits to schools, providing valuable insights into Norway's approach to integrating sustainability into the curriculum.

5. ESTONIA (TALLINN)

During this mobility, seven members of staff participated in training courses in Estonia. The experience exposed them to the realities within Estonia and gave them the opportunity to visit and explore various establishments dealing with disability including the disability village, Maarja Village.



6. ICELAND

Four members of staff participated in this mobility programme aimed at enhancing sign language interpretation services. The training focused on understanding the host organisation's role in service provision to sign language users, especially in the educational and academic sectors. It also explored coproduction involving the Deaf community and shared best practices in sign language interpretation.

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

In addition, Aġenzija Sapport was awarded a new KA2 Small Partnership Project. The Project, titled "Let's Talk About It!" focuses on training professionals and frontliners to handle



and teach individuals with disabilities about their sexual needs. The project aims to address an often-overlooked aspect of education by providing comprehensive training and resources, ensuring that they are well-equipped to support the sexual health and well-being of persons with disabilities. The project will cost €60,000.

During the year under review, the Agency also continued the implementation of the project "Beyond Disability". Estimated at a cost of €30,000, the project has created an accredited training award for professionals in the psychosocial field. The training will be delivered in 2024 and will provide attendees with tools that will assist them in the delivery of therapeutic services on a daily basis. If successful, Aġenzija Sapport will continue to develop additional training in this regard.



The Hybrid Learning Project led by Vestifex Adult Learning Centre from Estonia, in which Aġenzija Sapport was partner with, was also closed off in 2023. Through this project, the Agency created an online toolkit that allowed partners to share hybrid learning training ideas.

2023 also saw the closure of the KA1 project New Horizons. This was the first project initiated by Aġenzija Sapport back in 2022 prior to its accreditation. The project saw 30 successful mobilities and had a heavy focus on giving opportunities to Support Workers, Leaders and Coordinators to understand other realities within our partner country – Estonia.



STRATEGIC MARKETING & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

The brand promise of the Agency to its stakeholders is of utmost importance. Agenzija Sapport is there to deliver support and guide persons with disabilities and their family members and also be a leader in the implementation of the UNCRPD, empowering persons with disabilities to access their rights and freedoms. The Strategic Marketing & International Relations Department assists the Agency in retaining constant visibility of all this through promotion of its various services and initiatives, also serving as key focal point for internal and external communication and as a main link to the Agency's international network.

MAIN STRATEGIC MARKETING ACHIEVEMENTS

Campaigns:

- Agenzija Sapport 20th Anniversary
- New website
- Family Support Unit workshops
 - Positive parenting
 - Super Sibs
 - Fathers' workshops
 - Workshops for adult siblings
- Vehicle schemes
- Call for volunteers
- ACTU conference
- KreAzzjoni
- EU Disability Card
- Personal Assistance reform public consultation
- Disability week

Social media followers as at end December 2023:

Facebook - 14,560

Instagram - 1,116

LinkedIn - 142 (creation of new page in 2023)

X - 104

**128,463 WEBSITE
PAGE VIEWS
BETWEEN
JANUARY –
DECEMBER 2023**



**124 MEDIA
PROGRAMMES
ATTENDED
JANUARY –
DECEMBER 2023**





L-Assistenza Personali

“Ladarba jkolluk l-assistenza personali tara li hajtek inbidlet ghaliex tikseb anke l-indipendenza... hija xi haġa ta' inkoraġġiment.”

MARIA MERECICA

 AĠENZIJJA SAPPORT

www.sapport.gov.mt

SOCIAL WORK



www.sapport.gov.mt

Social Workers work with persons with disability and their families / guardians and other professionals to provide support in a holistic and effective way.

The Social Work team provides individualised interventions that enable and empower children, young adults and adults with disability to recognise their abilities, realise their vision and enhance their quality of life.

Aġenzija Sapport Helpline
Freephone 153

2256 8000 (Malta)
2156 9909 (Gozo)

www.sapport.gov.mt
sapport@gov.mt

 20 AĠENZIJJA SAPPORT
20 YEARS OF SERVICE

DISABILITY WEEK 2023

MYTH vs FACT

All disabilities can be seen

Disabilities are not always visible and may have a minimal or substantial impact on a person's abilities

 AĠENZIJJA SAPPORT

www.sapport.gov.mt



The EU Disability Card service is now offered by Aġenzija Sapport

© Aġenzija Sapport Helpline - Freephone 153 (press 5)
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accessibility.sapport@gov.mt
www.eudisabilitycard.org.mt

Aġenzija Sapport
Patri Ġwann Azzopardi Street
Santa Venera, SVR 1614

 AĠENZIJJA SAPPORT



Events:

January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification for Sapport and Inspire staff who attended MATP • Launch of new drive-from-wheelchair vehicle
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start of the Sapport 20th Anniversary campaign • Signing of agreement between Aġenzija Sapport and MTF • Signing of MOU between Aġenzija Sapport and the Faculty of Social Well-being
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification of Way to Work Programme participants • Sapport new website going live • Signing of MOU between Aġenzija Sapport and the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector • Conference in collaboration with Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) and the Department for Disability Studies within UOM on “Family and person-centred services for children and young people with disability”
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing of MOU between Aġenzija Sapport and Special Olympics Malta • Participation in Public Service Expo • Launch of new vehicle schemes: Drive from Wheelchair Vehicle Grant and Grant on the Purchase of Second-hand Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing of PSP with ALS Malta Foundation for Dar Bjorn Żebbuġ • Signing of MOU between Aġenzija Sapport and Voice for Inclusion Gozo • Hosted a visit of the Principal Permanent Secretary at Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq Day Centre • Hosted Minister Julia Farrugia Portelli for a visit to Aġenzija Sapport Head Office • Hosted official visit to Kirkop site of new supported independent living premises
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted the international gastro competition Cupid’s Spoon
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing of PSP with HILA Homes for Dar Santa Rosa • Hosted the Prime Minister for an official visit to Dar Warda in Pembroke • Hosted official visit to Dingli site of new respite premises • Certification of Way to Work Programme participants
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of public consultation for the PA reform • Opening of KreAzzjoni • Participation in careers expo and Freshers’ Week events
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of EU Disability Card service • Certification of Way to Work Programme participants in Gozo
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sapport 20th Anniversary staff event



MAIN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ACHIEVEMENTS

The International Relations role within the Agency is instrumental in bridging connections with international counterparts and organisations, thus allowing the Agency to network with other service providers and stakeholders, expand its possibilities for collaborations and share best practices to be able to develop and implement new projects and initiatives.

Such achievements in the year under review included:

- Joined the Federation of European Social Employers as members.
- Further representation on the EASPD Member Fora on Inclusive Living, Early Childhood Intervention and Person-Centred Technology.

Main international opportunities attended by Agenzija Sapport employees and service users in 2023 included:

- AAATE 2023 conference on “Assistive Technology- Shaping a Sustainable World”, Paris
- AIAS Bologna study visit as part of the MOU between Agenzija Sapport and AIAS Bologna, Italy
- Coface “European Expert Meeting on Family Diversity”, Spain
- COSP16, New York
- Cupid’s Spoon gastro competition final, Croatia
- Digitales project conference, Sweden
- AccessibiliTech project final dissemination conference, Brussels
- EASPD conference: “Family-centred Early Childhood Intervention: How to make it work”, Albania
- EASPD conference: “Enabling Social Innovation: Concepts, frameworks & organisational change”, Finland
- EASPD Lighthouse study visit to LivesthroughFriends, UK



- EASPD UNIC final conference on “Personal budgets: a human rights-based way to fund and organise support”, Brussels
- EFSLI conference on “Tactile Communication for Sign Language Interpreters”, Brussels
- European Social Network (ESN) seminar on “Community-based Social Services - Leading Care in the Community”, Spain
- ESN Annual Conference 2023, Sweden
- UN conference on “Transition towards Independent Living within the Community for Persons with Disabilities”, Beirut
- FORSEE conference on “Social Services in times of crises: Building resilience and improving attractiveness”, Brussels
- Federation of European Social Employers conference on “Improving Working Conditions in Social Services: Promising Practices from Across Europe”, Brussels
- ISAAC conference, Mexico




- Center for European Volunteering: Training on “Integrating persons with disabilities in Volunteering Organisations”, Italy
- World Association of Sign Language Interpreters Conference 2023, South Korea

The Agency also hosted delegations from Azerbaijan, Sicily, Lithuania, Norway and Italy.

WAY FORWARD

The Strategic Marketing & International Relations Department will continue to promote and be part of the alignment of the Agency with the UNCRPD on deinstitutionalisation and coproduction. Thus the team will focus on further dissemination of the narrative that is in line with the Agency’s strategy both on a local level and also international.

 A hand holding a white pen, writing on a document. The hand is wearing a black watch. The background is a blurred office desk with a laptop and papers.

FINANCE & PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT

The Finance & Procurement Department is entrusted with the responsibility of the overall financial governance and procurement function of the Agency. It is responsible for all the accounting transactions, financial analysis and reporting, budgetary allocation and control and treasury management.

It is also responsible for the drafting, publishing and evaluation of Tenders and calls for quotations. All responsibilities are conducted in accordance with statutory obligations, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the Public Procurement Regulations and other relevant legislation. The members of the Finance & Procurement Department strive to provide adequate and timely reporting and to act as a supporting arm to the other departments within the Agency.

As defined by the financial results of the year, it is evident that the Agency continues to grow both in the number of services it provides, as well as its resource capacity. During the year under review, it experienced an increase in requests from service users who required personal assistance and community-based services as well as subsidies for assistive equipment. As a result, the operational expenditure increased, as well as that of a capital nature.

In line with its strategic plan, the Agency required new injection of funds and increased financial governance. This entailed that the Finance Department managed its finances more efficiently and effectively, in an accountable and transparent manner ensuring quality services and value for money.

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

In order to maintain a sustainable service, the Agency required additional Government investment for the disability sector, which increased over the previous year (Table 14). In 2023, €30.9 million were received in government grants, programmes and initiatives and capital grants.

This was a positive investment by the Government in this sector and equates to a 4% increase over the previous year.

	2021	2022	2023
Government subvention	€20,530,000	€22,000,000	€22,950,000
Other grants	€6,114,443	€7,767,460	€8,006,618
Totals	€26,644,443	€29,767,460	€30,956,618

Table 14: Government subvention and other grants, 2021 - 2023

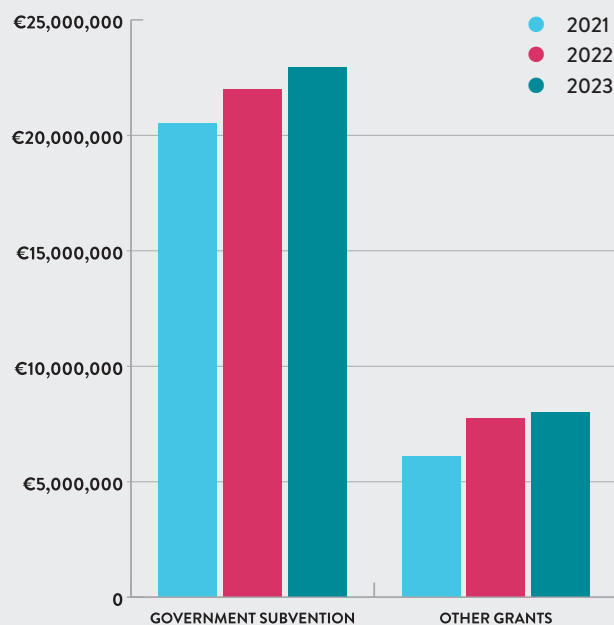


Figure 4: Government subvention and other grants, 2021 - 2023

RECURRENT EXPENDITURE

The operational and administrative expenses of the Agency are split in cost centres for the following main services provided:

- Day Centres
- Supported Independent Living Units
- Community Services
- Social Work
- Independent Community Living
- Access to Communication and Technology Unit
- Administration, Human Resources, Finance and Office of the CEO
- Marketing
- Client Schemes

Operational expense for the years 2022 and 2023 is shown in Figure 5 with the main expenses being those of payroll, transport, supported independent living units, respite services and client schemes.

In 2023, operational expense increased by 3.4% with the most significant increase being in the community-based service user schemes for personal assistance and equipment. Payroll increased by 1.3% due to Collective Agreement increase provisions and increments, as well as additional recruitment of several professionals and other frontline workers in the field. However, a number of resignations retained the payroll cost lower than estimated. Investments were made in the information technology systems to assist the Agency's staff with better tools to provide services.

The Agency also continued to implement the Budget Measures and Electoral Manifesto Proposals through ring-fenced funding.

	2022	2023
Payroll	€16,596,965	€16,815,594
Operational Expenditure	€11,820,430	€12,705,919
Administrative Expenditure	€1,392,234	€1,301,631
Totals	€29,809,629	€30,823,144

Table 15: Recurrent expenditure and payroll cost per unit, 2022 - 2023

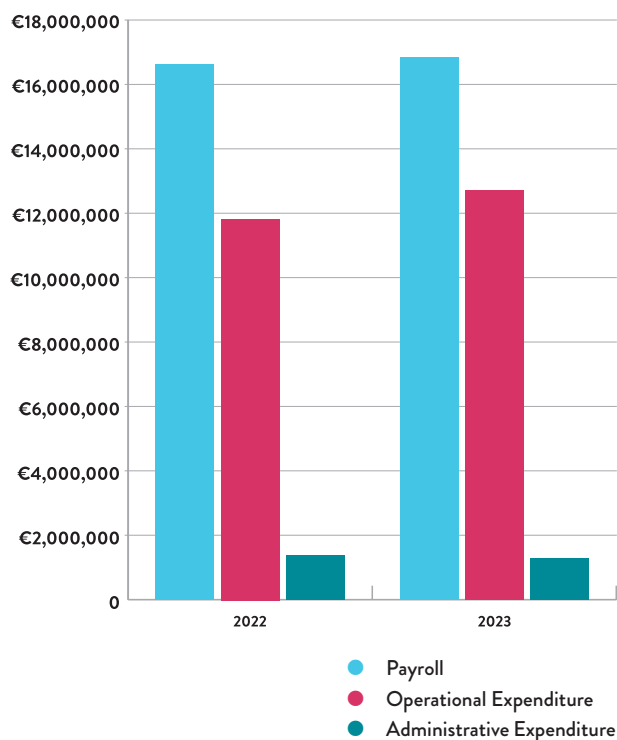


Figure 5: Recurrent expenditure and payroll cost per unit, 2022 - 2023

The Finance Department ensures that all expenditure is in line with Public Procurement Regulations and Employment & Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) regulations. Expenses are authorised in line with policies, established procedures and internal controls. All Government grants received by Aġenzija Sapport were utilised in the most efficient way possible in order to provide the best value for money service to vulnerable service users.

PROCUREMENT

The Procurement unit ensures that supplies, works and services are procured in line with legislation and other relevant regulations. The unit is also responsible for developing policies and procedures. During the year under review, this unit managed a significant number of procurement processes ranging from multi-million Tenders to requests for quotations, direct orders, addenda and contract modifications.

This unit is also involved in the management of supplier relationships, contract documentation and compliance. During the year 2023, this unit continued to serve as an important service arm to all other departments and service users.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

The Agency, through capital grants obtained from the Government, continued to invest in its asset base through the completion of the Qrendi Supported Independent Living unit and works on STILC and Rabat community hub projects. Financial commitments were put in place to complete a number of other projects across Malta and Gozo. A number of other smaller projects were carried out during the year to embellish the Agency's properties and update equipment.



20 S E N A T A ' S E R V I Z Z

20 YEARS OF AĠENZIJA SAPPOR

The year 2023 was an important milestone for Aġenzija Sappor. It was a year during which the Agency marked and celebrated its 20 years of service since it was established as an Agency in 2003, the development of the services to how they are today, a journey that brought various changes, experiences, achievements and challenges.

The Agency marked these throughout the year through various initiatives involving both staff and service users. The major achievements are listed in Table 16.

2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aġenzija Sappor established as an agency • Started with Residential, Community and Social Work Services • Established the Service Allocation Committee • Opening of Kirkop, Mtarfa and Marsascala residences • 115 staff complement
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 244 number of persons with disability assisted by the Social Work team
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of the first website of Aġenzija Sappor
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Collective Agreement for Aġenzija Sappor employees
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day Services joined the Agency (Fleur-de-Lys, Hal Far, Marsascala, Mtarfa, Mtarfa Resource, Santa Venera, Cottonera, Swatar and Paola)
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening of Dar Andrew (Cospicua)
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,910 the number of interventions by Social Work services during the year
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of new Head Office in Santa Venera • Opening of Birżebbuġa residence
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening of Gwardjola and Spero Day Centres
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening of Dar Orkidea (Siġġiewi) • Opening of Għajnsielem Learning Hub • Introduction of workshops and support groups for parents
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st April – Aġenzija Sappor became an autonomous Agency • Agency re-branding • Launch of SLI Service

2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening of Sliema Skills Space • Opening of Dar Ave Maria (Marsa), Dar Warda (Pembroke) and Dar il-Fjuri (Rabat, Gozo) • Opening of the Professional Development Centre offices in Santa Venera • Launch of Sharing Lives Service • Joined the ESN as members • Launch of Jobs Enhancing Skills Scheme • Start of the Personal Assistant Scheme • Transfer of Empowerment Scheme and Vehicle Road Licence and Registration Tax Exemption Schemes from CRPD to Aġenzija Sapport • Introduction of workshops for siblings of persons with disability
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of EU Project INK • Opening of Dar Iris (Żabbar)
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First licenses for Sapport services granted by the Social Care Standards Authority • Transfer of the ACTU from the Ministry of Education to Aġenzija Sapport • Transfer of the STILC from CRPD to Aġenzija Sapport • Became members of the European Disability Forum and EASPD • Hosted the international conference Accessible Europe – ICT 4 ALL in collaboration with the Information Technology Unit
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening of Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq Day Centre • Launch of Aġenzija Sapport Helpline
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of the Agency's first Consultative Committee for service users • First Positive Parenting Programme for parents of children with a disability • Addition of Driver Test Station within STILC • The Agency's Community Services awarded the European Social Services award for Excellence 2021 by the ESN • INK Project awarded the National Supporting Business Awards 2021 in Responsible & Inclusive Entrepreneurship

2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded the Quality Mark by the ESC to host international volunteers within Sharing Lives Service • Introduction of Blue Badge Scheme • Launch of Ġirasol Community Hub (Rabat) • Launch of the Way to Work Programme • Opening of Dar Ġizimina (Żurrieq) • Introduction of Super Sibs workshops for children who have a sibling with a disability • Co-hosted the international conference 'Quality of Life & Support Services' – From Words to Action in collaboration with EASPD • 614 – Staff complement
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became members of the Federation of European Social Employers • Addition of drive from wheelchair vehicle • National conference 'Family and person-centred services for children and young people with disability', in collaboration with RMHC Malta and the Department for Disability Studies • Launch of new website • Introduction of two new grants for the purchase of drive from wheelchair vehicles and second-hand wheelchair accessible vehicles • Addition of EU Disability Card service • Public Consultation on PA reform • Focus on deinstitutionalisation

Table 16: Major milestones for Aġenzija Sapport, 2003 – 2023

1st December 2023 was the date chosen for an event that saw Sappurt employees come together to celebrate this important milestone of the Agency and their contribution through their service. This event was coordinated by representatives from different departments.

This event included:

- Launch of a song about the Agency's history, co-authored and performed by two members of staff.
- Presentation of tokens to employees who reached 20 years of service.
- Presentation of awards to employees who reached 15-19 years of service.
- Presentation of certificates to employees who reached 10-14 years of service. The design of the certificate was chosen after an open call for artwork created by service users.
- A number of features about staff experiences.

All Sappurt teams were bestowed a value that most reflects the ethos of the respective unit. In an effort to award everyone's commitment towards the Agency and its service users, the teams were presented with a token.





TEAM	VALUE
Access to Communication & Technology Unit	Passion
Blue Badge Team	Accessibility
CEO's Office	Strategy
Community Team	Dedication
Customer Care Department	Support
Day Services Team	Diversity
Family Support Unit	Outreach
Finance & Procurement Team	Accountability
Human Resource Team	Innovation
Independent Community Living Monitoring Team	Drive
Intake Team	Empathy
Non-Governmental Organisations Team	Collaboration
Occupational Therapy Team	Diligence
People Assistance Schemes	Inclusion
Professional Advisory & Prevention Team	Proactiveness
Projects, EU, Administration and Maintenance Team	Dynamism
Quality Audit, Research & Innovation Team	Integrity
Sharing Lives Team	Creativity
Sign Language Interpreting Team	Working in Partnership
Social Work Team	Perseverance
Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre	Empowerment
Strategic Marketing and International Relations Team	Versatility
Supported Independent Living Centre	Resilience
Way to Work Programme Team	Enthusiasm

Table 17: Teams' values as awarded during the Agency's 20th Anniversary event in December 2023

TESTIMONIALS



"Aġenzija Support means a lot to me because it empowered me to live a more independent life."

***Jonathan Calleja, service user,
Supported Independent Living Service***



"I would like to say a big thank you to the Support Worker for the help she gave me and for also helping me to speak for myself."

Isabelle Bonello, service user, Social Work Service



"A lot of good is being done with my work for persons with disabilities... and I love the family atmosphere I have with my colleagues."

Shawn Caruana, Leader, Finance Department

"Knowing that I am in a position to communicate and be a focal person about the Agency's services is what motivates me in my job. These are all services that lead persons with disabilities towards independent living and improve their quality of life."

Margaret Borg Said, Helpline Officer

AĠENZIJA SAPPOR CEOs



MARCEL PISANI

REPRESENTED BY ADELINA AND MATTHEW PISANI
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER, 2003 - 2012



BRIAN GAUCI

CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER,
2012 - 2013



MAURO FARRUGIA

DIRECTOR, 2013 – 2016
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, 2016



JOSEPH CINI

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
2016 – 2019



RUTH SCIBERRAS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
2019 – 2022



OLIVER SCICLUNA

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
2022 – TO DATE



Patri Ġwann Azzopardi Street,
Santa Venera SVR 1614
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Aġenzija Sapport Helpline - Freephone 153

www.support.gov.mt

